

# **XHOSA-SPEAKING LEARNERS' READING COMPREHENSION IN ENGLISH FIRST ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE: A READING INTERVENTION AT A TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL**

**Mona M. Matthews**

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**Supervisor: Professor C. van der Walt**

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## SUMMARY

This study focuses on the effect of a reading strategy instruction research intervention on Grade 8 isiXhosa-speaking learners' comprehension of English reading texts at a township high school.

Throughout the years, South Africans have become increasingly aware of the poor literacy levels of the learners. Results from National Assessment Studies e.g., Annual National Assessments and Systemic Evaluation Assessment, performed annually by the Department of Education, as well as International Assessment Studies e.g., Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ III, 2007 and Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS 2006), confirm that our learners cannot read for meaning and therefore reading comprehension, is a severe concern. The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS, 2011) places reading under three phases (pre-reading, reading and post-reading), however, it fails to place explicit focus on training teachers to instruct reading comprehension. With English becoming increasingly the language of instruction for non-English first language speakers (as in the case of the isiXhosa-speaking learners at the research school), there is a growing need to provide learners with techniques that will equip them to construct meaning from texts.

This study, therefore, addresses the need for reading comprehension through the use of pre-selected, research-based reading strategies, that can be taught to the learners to improve their meaning-making efforts during the reading process. The reading strategies together with selected reading instruction activities aim to provide learners and teachers alike with sufficient guidance for implementing reading strategies and in the case of teachers, to encourage a sustained change in their comprehension instruction.

This study applies a mixed-method methodology for gathering both quantitative and qualitative data. The purpose of the quantitative data is firstly to provide baseline data of reading-related abilities for learners before the implementation of the intervention, and secondly, to provide comparative data of strategy transfer after the intervention. The qualitative data is gathered through observations of the implementation of the reading strategies during the intervention, participants' journals and through samples of participants' work. The data aim to provide rich, in-depth data about how the participants in the research took on reading strategy instruction and the factors that influenced them.



This study identified a number of issues: [1] participants' understanding of the content of the presented English reading texts during the intervention, [2] participants' low literacy levels, [3] participants' uptake of the concept of dealing with the different strategies while engaging with a text and [4] the school as a research site that affect reading strategy instruction to Grade 8 isiXhosa-speaking learners in a multilingual environment, but also highlighted the importance of continued implementation of reading instruction as crucial to its success.

The findings of this study created a platform for teachers to instruct reading comprehension in different content subjects and provide learners with a selection of reading strategies that they can apply in making meaning of texts they encounter in different subject areas.

## OPSOMMING

Die studie fokus op die uitwerking van 'n leesstrategie onderrigintervensie wat onderrig word aan Graad 8 isiXhosa-sprekende leerders ter verbetering van hulle begrip van Engelse tekste by 'n plaaslike hoërskool.

Deur die jare het Suid Afrikaners al hoe meer bewus geword van die kommerwekkende lae geletterdheidsvlakke van die leerders. Resultate van nasionale evaluering studies, byvoorbeeld, die Jaarlikse Nasionale Assessering en Sistemiese Evalueringtoetse, wat jaarliks uitgevoer word deur die Departement van Onderwys, asook internasionale evaluering studies, byvoorbeeld, Suidelike Afrikaanse Konsortium vir Monitoring Opvoedkundige Kwaliteit (SACMEQ III, 2007) en Progressie in Internasionale Lees Geletterdheidstudie (PIRLS, 2006), bevestig dat ons leerders nie sinvol kan lees nie en derhalwe het hulle bevind dat leesbegrip 'n ernstige bron van kommer is. Die Kurrikulum en Assessering Beleidsverklaring (KABV, 2011), plaas lees onder drie fases (voor-lees, lees en na-lees), maar dit laat na om eksplisiete fokus te plaas op die opleiding van onderwysers om leesbegrip te onderrig. Met Engels wat toenemend die taal van onderrig vir nie-Engelssprekende eerstetaalleerders word (soos in die geval van isiXhosa-sprekende leerders by die navorsingskool), is daar 'n toenemende behoefte om leerders toe te rus met tegnieke om betekenis uit tekste te skep.

Hierdie studie maak gebruik van voorafgeselekteerde, navorsingsgebaseerde leesstrategieë waarin leerders onderrig kan word ter verbetering van hulle pogings om betekenis te maak tydens die leesproses. Beide die leesstrategieë en geselekteerde leesonderrigaktiwiteite poog daarin om voldoende leiding te verskaf aan leerders sowel as onderwysers om die leesstrategieë te implementeer. Dit poog ook verder om volgehoue verandering in leesbegrip onderrig by onderwysers aan te moedig.

Die studie maak gebruik van 'n gemengde-metode metodologie vir die insameling van kwantitatiewe en kwalitatiewe data. Die doel van die kwantitatiewe data is eerstens om basisdata oor leesverwante vermoëns van leerders vóór die implementering van die intervensie te verskaf, en tweedens dien dit as vergelykbare data van strategie metingsoordrag ná die intervensie. Die kwalitatiewe data is versamel deur waarnemings gedurende die implementering van leesstrategieë tydens die intervensie, dagboek-inskrywings van navorsingsleerders asook voorbeelde van leerders se werk. Die data verskaf ryk, diepgaande data oor die manier waarop die deelnemers die onderrig van leesstrategieë aangeneem het en die faktore wat hulle beïnvloed het.

Die studie het 'n aantal kwessies: [1] deelnemers se begrip van die inhoud van Engelse leestekste gedurende die intervensie, [2] deelnemers se lae geletterheidsvlakke, [3] aanvaarding van leesstrategie-onderrig deur die leerders en [4] die skool as navorsingsplek identifiseer wat leesstrategieonderrig aan Graad 8 isiXhosa-sprekende leerders in 'n meertalige omgewing beïnvloed, maar terselfdertyd het dit die belangrikheid van volgehoue implementering van leesonderrig beklemtoon as onontbeerlik vir die sukses daarvan.

Die bevindings van die studie het 'n platform daargestel vir onderwysers om leesbegrip in verskillende inhoudsvakke te onderrig, asook 'n seleksie van leesstrategieë wat leerders kan toepas in hulle poging om betekenis te maak van tekste waarmee hulle in verskillende vakinhoud te doen kry.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

<b>ANA</b>	Annual National Assessment
<b>AR</b>	Action Research
<b>CAPS</b>	Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement
<b>CEA</b>	Centre for Evaluation and Assessment
<b>CUP</b>	Common Underlying Proficiency
<b>DRTA</b>	Directed Reading Thinking Activity
<b>ESL</b>	English Second Language
<b>FAL</b>	First Additional Language
<b>HL</b>	Home Language
<b>HOD</b>	Head of Department
<b>LOLT</b>	Language of Learning and Teaching
<b>LRD</b>	Listen-Read-Discuss
<b>MLA</b>	Monitoring Learning Achievement
<b>NRS</b>	National Reading Strategy
<b>PIRLS</b>	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
<b>PRAESA</b>	Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa
<b>QAR</b>	Question-Answer-Relationship
<b>RAD</b>	Reading Age Difference
<b>RASA</b>	Reading Association of South Africa
<b>RNCS</b>	Revised National Curriculum Statement
<b>RSI</b>	Reading Strategy Instruction
<b>RST</b>	Reading Strategy Test
<b>RSTT</b>	Reading Strategy Transfer Test
<b>SACMEQ</b>	Southern African Consortium for Monitoring of Educational Quality
<b>SES</b>	Socio Economic Status
<b>SMT</b>	Senior Management Team
<b>SDRT</b>	Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test
<b>WCED</b>	Western Cape Education Department

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

*"To acquire the habit of reading is to construct for yourself a refuge from almost all the miseries of life."*

- W. Somerset Maugham

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

*'The learners cannot read'*. These words are the frustrated outcry of many South African teachers today and encapsulate the essence of what my proposed study is about. To be able to read is viewed as one of the most important skills a person could possess to make sense of the world. Reading is the "the building block upon which all learning takes place" (Department of Education, 2008:19). However, reading is not just print on paper, it is a social practice that is constrained, mediated, and shaped by the social forces inherent in a particular community of readers. Reading is what Grabe (1988:56) describes as "a dialogue between the reader and the text", and it "consists of both decoding and comprehension" (Pretorius & Ribbens, 2005: 139). The ultimate goal of reading is comprehension, in other words, to comprehend what is being read and therefore Graves, Juel & Graves (1998) describe comprehension as "the overall understanding process" whereby meaning is constructed.

Learners have to comprehend content in most of their academic disciplines and, if they have to deal with texts in a language they do not fully command, it becomes both a language and reading challenge. Even though Smith (2003:13) makes us aware of the fact that "not all children learn skills at the same time", the demands of schooling require that learners need help to achieve at grade-appropriate levels. They need to be taught the appropriate skills through comprehension instruction to enable them to understand what is being read. For this reason, this study is aimed at the explicit teaching of reading strategies for improving Grade 8 isiXhosa-speaking learners' reading comprehension in English First Additional Language.

#### 1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Education is at the heart of every nation in the world and South Africa is no exception. Over the years South Africans have become more aware of how poorly their children



perform in literacy compared to other nations. Various assessment surveys done by the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) (Howie, S., Venter, E., Van Staden, S., Zimmerman, L., Long, C., Scherman, V. & Archer, E. 2007), Monitoring Learning Achievement (MLA, 1999), Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ III, 2007) and the Annual National Assessment (ANA, 2011 and 2012) confirm that the literacy and mathematics achievements of our children are far below the standard of their peers in other countries. Despite the attempts by several ministers of education to promote the importance of reading in schools through numerous policies and curricula, literacy studies done by the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2006 showed that South Africa's Grade 4 learners achieved the lowest score compared to the other 72 participating countries (Howie et al. 2007). These findings are also echoed in the results of the Monitoring Learning Achievement (MLA) cross-national study which placed the literacy levels of Grade 4 learners at 48.1 percent (Fleisch, 2008). The Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ III, 2007) is the most recent Grade 6 reading and numeracy survey conducted in all the participating SACMEQ countries. Results from this survey, which provide information on learners' mean reading scores, placed Tanzania (577.8), Seychelles (575.1) and Mauritius (573.5) at the top, whilst South Africa (494.9) scored lower than countries like Zanzibar (536), Botswana (534.6), Kenya (543.1) and even Zimbabwe with a mean reading score of 507.7 (see figure 1 at 2.4.1.2).

Results from the Annual National Assessment (2011 and 2012) on the literacy and numeracy skills of Grades 3, 6 and 9 learners seem to confirm the alarmingly low levels of reading and mathematics ability in South Africa (for comparison and discussion of the results see 2.4.1.2). The statistics paint a dismal picture of the current literacy and numeracy reality in South African education, especially pertaining to the reading competence of learners in primary schools. The assessment results further underline an urgent need for intervention strategies to remedy the literacy situation before we can ameliorate the situation where, as Moloi & Strauss (2005) put it: "more than half the children in South Africa's primary schools are not even reading at a minimum level to allow them to survive".

When the Department of Education conducted two national systemic evaluations to establish literacy and numeracy levels in primary schools in 2001 and 2004, they were shocked by the low levels of reading ability across the country. The results have shown that our learners simply do not read at grade and age-appropriate level. In an attempt to

rectify the poor literacy of the country, the Department of Education launched their National Reading Strategy (NRS) in 2008, in support of the United Nations Literacy Decade (2003-2013) and Literacy for All campaigns in an effort to increase literacy by 50% by 2015 (Department of Education, 2008:5).

The current curriculum implemented in South African schools is the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) which is to be implemented in three phases: the Foundation Phase (Grades 1-3) and Grade 10 was implemented in 2012, Intermediate Phase (Grades 4-6) and Grade 11 in 2013; and Senior Phase (Grade 7 -9) and 12 will be implemented in 2014. With CAPS the Department of Basic Education aims to produce one clear and accessible policy document, write a more streamlined curriculum, go back to subjects and essential subject knowledge, and standardised assessment (Curriculum News, May, 2011:14). In spite of the intended revisions of CAPS which is geared towards improvement, results from the latest national literacy performances conducted by the Centre for Evaluation and Assessment (CEA), in 2011 proved that Grade 3, 6 and 9 learners are still not literate at the appropriate level for their grade (see 2.4.1.1).

Poor literacy is generally related to historical disadvantages and poor socio-economic conditions. In South Africa, there are a number of specific reasons for the problems. The South African Department of Education's Language in Education Policy (1997) promotes additive multilingualism: the home language should be maintained, while effective access is provided to the acquisition of the additional language. De Vries (2006:6) is of the opinion that learners would perform better if they continue to learn in their mother tongue, but it is still not the case in South African schools where isiXhosa learners (in the case of my study) attend schools where the language of learning and teaching (LOLT) is English. The Department of Education (2008:7) states that "learners' language competence affects their performance in all subjects, at all grades. Therefore, if reading competence is poor, then learners' writing competence will be poor, and their comprehension (understanding) levels will equally be poor".

CAPS (2011:7) states that, "teachers should identify barriers to learning in the classroom and in order to address these barriers make use of various curriculum differentiation strategies". It further states that this can only happen if *all* teachers have a sound understanding of how to recognize and address barriers to learning, and how to plan for diversity (CAPS, 2011: 4). One of the obvious learning barriers, as revealed by the assessment surveys, is that our learners cannot read (in the sense of making meaning),

and if they cannot read, they cannot construct meaning. As mentioned in 1.1, learners need to be taught skills and competencies to overcome their learning barriers. It seems that the teachers in South Africa lack the necessary reading strategy knowledge to deal with the learning barriers in their classes. This is also echoed by the Department of Education (2008:8) that states “many teachers in South Africa have an under-developed understanding of teaching literacy, reading and writing”.

This study is concerned with reading comprehension and implementing reading strategies in order to improve comprehension in a particular group of learners. Research has shown that “comprehension can be improved when it is taught explicitly” (Paris & Hamilton, 2009:49). Reading comprehension strategies are “conscious and flexible plans that readers apply and adapt to a variety of texts and tasks” (Pearson, Roehler, Dole, & Duffy, 1992:169). Pressley (2001) claims, that teaching students to use a repertoire of comprehension strategies will increase their comprehension of text. Strategies should be taught to the learners explicitly with the aim that they will be able to implement the trained strategies when confronted with texts they have to comprehend. Strategy instruction should also be an integral and continuous part of reading instruction in schools.

### **1.3 RATIONALE AND CONTEXT FOR THIS STUDY**

As an educator of English First Additional Language at the research school, I observed that particularly Grade 8 isiXhosa learners found it difficult to comprehend English texts in tests and examinations, and their inability to do so impact on their academic results. The concern for the poor reading performance of these learners was also echoed by my colleagues who teach learning areas such as Science, Mathematics Literacy, Tourism, Hospitality and Geography where learners have to deal with different types of texts in English. The learners’ inability to comprehend what they read underlined the urgency of researched-based strategies to improving their reading comprehension. English, being their additional language, is not the only factor that affects the learners’ poor reading and comprehension performance. According to Cummins (1989:34) “the inability of ... learners to pass science and mathematics and other learning areas of high conceptual thinking, is due to lack of fluency in the language of instruction”. This is true of the isiXhosa learners who come from homes where isiXhosa is the dominant language of conversation. At the research school, however, they are taught in English. The language policy of the school is bilingual with the languages of teaching and learning being Afrikaans and English.

Labov's (2007:18) statement that "the failure of schools in low-income neighbourhoods to teach children to read is a serious social problem and a leading cause for increasing rates of unemployment, violent crime, incarceration and homelessness", can be applied to the community of the research school. Grabe & Stoller (2002:19) emphasize that "in academic settings ... the most common way for students to learn new information is through reading". Therefore, if learners become more proficient in reading, they are equipped with a life-skill which may assist them to access learning and hence further their personal development. The desire of all staff to help the isiXhosa learners contributed to the motivation for and relevance of this study.

## **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTION AND AIMS**

The primary goal of the study was to find a response to the research question: How can a reading intervention programme contribute to the improvement of Gr.8 isiXhosa learners' reading comprehension in English?

### **1.4.1 Main aims and specific objectives**

The first aim of the intervention was to design a reading strategy intervention from existing literature (see Chapter 3).

The second aim was to implement these strategies in order to improve the Xhosa speaking learners' reading comprehension of English texts (This is further discussed in Chapters 3 and 4).

The third aim was to monitor, assess and critically reflect on the impact of the reading intervention in order to implement a revised strategy if needed (see Chapters 4 and 5).

The fourth aim was to supply teachers with quantitative results to encourage a sustained change in their comprehension instruction (see Chapter 5).

## 1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 1.5.1 Research Design

#### 1.5.1.1 Action Research (AR)

In an attempt to answer the research question this study drew on action research (AR) which is a multi-focused method. Through action research (AR) the researcher is actively involved in bringing about change in real-life social settings, for example the identified school in this research. AR is not set in stone, on the contrary, it is flexible and allows educators the opportunity to “act on, observe, reflect on and re-plan” the change they have initiated in order to improve the identified problem in their practice (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000:595). Action research is participatory, in other words, both the researcher and participants are involved in the research. Action research is cyclical in nature. The cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting provide the researchers with momentum to implement change and to reflect critically on the process (Wallace, 1998:12) (see Figure 4.1 for a graphic representation of AR to illustrate the cyclic nature of AR and how the process proceeds sequentially). Through these cycles, the educator hopes to “become aware of what is really happening” (Grabe & Stoller, 2002:157) in the classrooms at the school and relevant problem solving can be attempted as the project progresses. Thus, through action research, the researcher takes on the role of a positive change agent.

#### 1.5.1.2 A cyclical process of the intervention

The reading intervention focused on isiXhosa learners as second language speakers of English and was implemented in two cycles. By using multiple cycles the researcher is able to achieve a “gradual refinement of the situation under investigation” (Bylefeld, 2005:1327).

The intended intervention was designed along the following framework:

**Step 1:** The first step was to determine the target group size and to obtain baseline data. To determine this, a Baseline Test (see Appendix A) was administered to a whole Gr.8 isiXhosa class to assess their level of reading comprehension in English. The results from this test determined the size of the invited focus group participants in the intervention program.

**Step 2:** Data was gathered on the target group:

The Burt Word Reading Test was administered to assess each participant's reading level and word recognition. The data of the reading test was also used to compare the participants' reading age to their real age. (See Appendix B).

A Reading Strategy Test was administered to obtain data on the participants' knowledge of reading strategies. (See Appendix D).

**Step 3:** First cycle: Constructing and implementing of the intervention plan(s):

With the data from the Baseline Test and Reading Strategy Test, a selection of intervention strategies was used to design the intervention. Age-appropriate reading texts were used in the implementation of four reading strategies, e.g., Activating prior knowledge, Monitoring reading, Questioning and Summarising. These reading strategies were implemented through reading strategy instruction over a period of three months.

**Step 4:** Reflection on the effectiveness of the intervention:

Reflection on the effectiveness of the implemented intervention strategies happened continuously throughout the implementation. Strategies that needed to be readapted were identified.

**Step 5:** Second cycle: Implementing the revised reading strategies

Based on the feedback of the strategies that were implemented in the first cycle, three reading strategies (monitoring reading, questioning and summarising) needed to be taught again in order to strengthen the participants' use of these strategies.

**Step 6:** Comparison of examination marks in English and their other subjects.

The June English examination results of participants were obtained from the school. These scores (in percentages) were compared to the scores in their March examination before the intervention to observe if any improvement in their English results had taken place.

## 1.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In honouring the ethical protocol needed for this research, permission to conduct research at the school was obtained from the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) (see Appendix I) and ethical clearance for the research project was obtained from Stellenbosch University Research Ethics Committee (see Appendix J). Permission to perform my research study at the research school was obtained from the principal (see Appendix K). Seeing that the participants were minors, written consent was obtained from the parents to allow their children to participate in the intervention (see Appendix L1). A signed Participant Informational Leaflet and Assent Form were obtained from the research participants that explained the research purpose and methods of the study (see Appendix M1). Working with participants whose home language is isiXhosa propelled me to translate the consent forms for the parents as well as the participants in isiXhosa to prevent any misunderstanding what the study is about (see Appendix L2 and M2 for examples).

## 1.7 BACKGROUND of SHARKY HIGH SCHOOL<sup>1</sup>

Sharky High School is situated in the small, but world-famous “white shark” town. The current demographics of the school reflect 283 black, 304 coloured and 96 white learners. The teaching staff is made up of 8 coloured, 2 black and 14 white educators. The learners as well as the teaching staff reflect the multi-racial character of the school. Sharky High school was chosen as the research school because (1) the researcher is an English FAL educator at the school, and (2) being a multicultural school, learners (especially the isiXhosa learners) are taught in a language that differs from their home language.

The school is situated in the poverty-stricken “coloured” township where most of the parents or guardians have low-income jobs or are unemployed. The school serves a primarily Afrikaans speaking community which is living in difficult socio-economic circumstances. Being a non-school-fee institution, it struggles to satisfy all the needs of the learners and teaching staff and it is therefore dependent on monetary donations from the local business fraternity. Being three years old, the school is heavily under-resourced, poorly equipped and classes are overcrowded. The library is active, but has too little age-appropriate reading material.

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<sup>1</sup> A pseudonym has been used to protect the name of the real research school.



Even though approximately 50% of the learners are isiXhosa speaking, the teachers speak Afrikaans and the language of teaching and learning (LoLT) is Afrikaans and English. This has profound implications for the isiXhosa learners who, except for their home language, are taught all their other subjects in English. It is immensely difficult for these learners to comprehend information provided/taught in a second language. A reason why these isiXhosa learners do not master the language of the school, which is different from their dominant language, could be attributed to what Fleish (2008:105) refers to as a “lack of deep understanding” of their dominant language (because it is not used officially in academic contexts) and therefore they cannot transfer that understanding to the second language. This situation puts the isiXhosa-speaking learners at a disadvantage compared to their Afrikaans counterparts who can predict the outcome of some words in English more accurately, given the fact that these Afrikaans and English words originate from the same language family. Another reason why Afrikaans or English home language speakers can more easily recognise some words could be because these speakers tend to be exposed to both languages at home unlike their isiXhosa counterparts who come from a community where isiXhosa is the dominant language.

School attendance is often influenced by external circumstances. Learners’ attendance is influenced by the instability of buses and taxis that transport them from neighbouring towns. On rainy days attendance drops due to the fact that the majority of the learners have to walk quite a distance to school. Another factor influencing the attendance is the practice among learners to stop attending school as soon as they have completed their exams at the end of each term, even though there are still days left until the official closing of the school.

## **1.8 LAYOUT of CHAPTERS**

In *Chapter 1* the researcher introduces the reader to the research topic and aims for the research study. It describes the background of the study, supplies the reader with results from literacy and numeracy studies done in South African schools and explains the social context of the school. The inability of isiXhosa learners’ comprehension of English First Additional text is investigated and identified as rationale for the study. The chapter further focuses on AR as the most appropriate research methodology to address the research aims of the study.



*Chapter 2* provides the theoretical framework for the research. It includes literature on reading development: the history of reading in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, reading in a second language and factors influencing English L2 readers. The current reading reality in South African schools will be discussed. National and international literacy and mathematical assessment studies will be discussed. General problems concerned with reading in a second language will be highlighted, followed by a discussion of the role of English in South Africa.

*Chapter 3* begins with a view of reading instruction, followed by an overview of comprehension instruction. After a discussion of reading strategies, the focus shifts to reading comprehension strategy instruction research and the teacher as focus point in delivering reading instruction. Different research-based reading strategies will be discussed followed by the strategies recommended to address the aim of this research intervention. The chapter will conclude with describing the different approaches to reading strategy instruction in the different phases of the reading process.

*Chapter 4* will introduce Action Research as the preferred methodology to implement the reading strategy intervention in addressing the research aims set out in this study. The underpinning assumptions that define AR are described, as are the desired outcomes. The chapter further describes details about the research participants, the intervention, instruments used for quantitative and qualitative data gathering. Lastly, it describes how the gathered data were analysed and interpreted.

*Chapter 5* describes the actual reading strategy instruction as it progresses over two AR cycles. The planning, acting, observing and reflecting phases of the AR cycles are described in detail. The chapter provides a detailed account of interpreted quantitative and qualitative data gathered during the study and describes how the research question and aims were addressed by the study.

In *Chapter 6* findings and conclusions from the analysed data are discussed and recommendations for future practice and research are made in order to tackle some of the literacy concerns South African teachers face in classroom situations every day.

## CHAPTER 2

### READING DEVELOPMENT

#### 2.1 READING

##### 2.1.1 A historical perspective of reading in the 20th century

The developments in reading pedagogy during and up to the 20th century were marked by enormous intellectual and curricular activity. According to Mathews (1996) by the turn of the 19th century “the reading scene was still dominated by alphabetic approaches”. These were classic synthetic phonics approaches (learn the parts before the whole) in which, at least in the earliest stages of learning to read, students encountered, in rapid succession, letter names, then letter sounds, then syllable blending activities that were organized into tight drill and practice sequences. Being able to read meant pronouncing the words on the page accurately and fluently. The role of the teacher was to provide the appropriate kinds of drill and practice.

The dominant view of reading as a cognitive process was known as the simple view of reading, a term that was invented by Philip Gough (1980) where reading comprehension was thought of as the product of decoding and listening comprehension, a view also shared by Gillian & Hall (2003:4). The major task of instruction was to ensure that students master the code so that comprehension can proceed more or less automatically. Although comprehension was not thought of at first, it was readily assumed to happen by decoding the signs on the page. A number of reading developments had an impact on the early 20th century. The period between 1900 –1950 saw the emerging of new ideas in the psychology and pedagogy of reading. These ideas included two main models of reading processing:

*bottom-up reading processing model*, which focuses on developing the basic skill of matching sounds with the letters, syllables, and words written on a page. In other words, the reading process is seen as a text driven decoding process (McKoon & Radcliff, 1992). The traditional bottom-up approach to reading was influenced by behaviourist psychology of the 1950s, which claimed learning was based upon “habit formation brought about by the repeated association of a stimulus with a response” (Omaggio, 1993:45). Samuels & Kamil (1988:25), are both of the opinion that behaviourism placed the emphasis on reading as a word-recognition response to the stimuli of the printed words, where “little

attempt was made to explain what went on within the recesses of the mind that allowed the human to make sense of the printed page".

*top-down reading processing models* of (Goodman, 1975 & Smith, 1971) are classified by Urquhart & Weir, 1998 as process models which represent readers as constantly hypothesising about conceptual meaning of a text. According to Clapham (1996), it is a concept-driven model where a reader moves from one sequence of a cycle to another, making hypotheses about the conceptual meaning of the text. However, this model of Goodman was criticised by Rayner & Pollatsek (1989:464) for its lack of precision and inability to show higher order process, such as making prediction and inferences.

In contrast to the reading process model of Goodman, the top-down model of Smith (1971) stresses the importance of making predictions during reading and describes reading as a psycholinguistic process. This model, according to Kobeil (1999:28) is based on four principles e.g., [1] reading is purposeful, [2] reading is selective, [3] reading is based on comprehension and [4] reading is anticipatory. In other words, while reading, readers have a purpose in mind, they are selective in their reading and they employ their background knowledge to confirm or disconfirm the information they read. By drawing on their background knowledge, the readers anticipate the content.

During the 1960s a paradigm shift took place towards the cognitive sciences as behaviourism theory became partially questioned. The new cognitive theory embodied the mind's distinctive capacity for learning which gave new clarifying power to how humans acquired their first language. Psycholinguists such as Ausubel (1968) explained "how such internal representations of the foreign language develop within the learner's mind" (Omaggio, 1993: 57). Ausubel's research, from a cognitive psychology perspective, led to a significant contribution when he made an important distinction between meaningful learning and rote learning. Ausubel (1968) stated that rote learning is simply memorizing lists of isolated words in a new language leading to the information becoming temporary and subject to loss. On the other hand he explains that meaningful learning occurs when new information is presented in a relevant context and is related to what the learner already knows, thereby being "easily integrated into one's existing cognitive structure" (Omaggio, 1993:58). According to Ausubel (1968), learning that is not meaningful (in terms of what the learner already knows) will not become permanent.

The last third of the 20th century was characterised by fundamental shifts in the views of reading and writing and the beginning of a variety of serious curricular alternatives to the

conventional wisdom of the 1970s (Pearson, 2000:11). Clearly these alternatives would have had far-reaching consequences for reading curriculum of the 1980s and 1990s. Reading was embraced by “scholars from many different fields of inquiry, not only linguists, but also psycholinguists, cognitive psychologists, sociolinguists, philosophers, literary critics, and the critical theorists” whose influences on reading education is significant and cannot be understood without a firm foundation in the changes in world view that these perspectives spawned (Pearson, 2000:11).

#### **2.1.1.1 The Linguists**

In 1962 Charles Fries a linguist, published *Linguistics and Reading* where he outlined what he thought the teaching of reading would look like from the perspective of linguistics. Linguists disagree and present different models and methods of teaching reading. It would tell us that some things do not need to be taught explicitly because the oral language takes care of them more or less automatically. For example, the three different pronunciations of –ed, (as in nabbed, capped and jaded), need not be taught as a reading skill because our oral language conventions determine the pronunciation almost perfectly (Pearson, 2000:12).

#### **2.1.1.2 The Psycholinguists**

A decade later a new field of inquiry, psycholinguistics, emerged. By studying the linguistic views concerning language competence and language acquisition set forth by Chomsky intensively for a few years, the psycholinguists discarded the thought that it could serve as psychological models of language performance (Pearson, 2000:12). Two prominent individuals, Kenneth Goodman and Frank Smith stepped forward, leading the reading field. Empirical tests done by Goodman (1965) concluded that mistakes children made while reading in context revealed that they were trying to make sense of what they read. In an influential publication by Goodman “Reading: *The Psycholinguistic Guessing Game*” (1967:135), he mentions that readers make use of three cue systems to make sense of text: syntactic cues, semantic cues, and grapho-phonemic cues necessary “to reduce their uncertainty about unknown words or meanings”.

For Smith (1971), on the other hand, reading was not taught, but something that was learned to do. In his book, *Understanding Reading : A Psycholinguistic Analysis of Reading and Learning to Read*, he argues that there were no preconditions to learning to read, but that “reading was what one learned to do as a consequence of belonging to a

literate society” (Smith, 1971:3). Smith further perceives reading as only incidentally visual, in other words, being able to see is necessary but not sufficient to achieve understanding. According to Smith (1971) skilled readers make use of the orthographic, syntactic, and semantic sources of information that is all part of their prior knowledge in order to minimize their dependence on visual information (Pearson, 2000:14). The psycholinguistic perspective had numerous influences on reading education. It valued literacy experiences that “focused on making meaning”, helped us to “value texts for beginning readers” and provided us a means (miscue analysis) and a theory (reading as a constructive process) that was completely different from previous ideas about reading (Smith, 1983: 558-567).

#### **2.1.1.3 The Sociolinguists**

Sociolinguistics as a discipline developed in parallel with psycholinguistics. Sociolinguists believe knowledge and language are socially and culturally constructed processes, incorporating not only readers’ prior knowledge in the form of schemata, but also the meanings constructed by peers and by one’s cultural ancestors (Pearson, 2000:17). Suddenly, reading was a part of a bigger and more complex world. For them, success in reading was not so much an indication of reading “ability” per se, but of the success the individual experienced in learning how to use language appropriately. From a sociolinguistic perspective success was not how well children could read but how well children learned to “do school”. By studying the community outside of school, sociolinguists made us aware of social, political, and cultural differences and with that came the growing awareness that “reading was not context-free, and that it was embedded in multiple contexts” for example, reading is embedded in language, in the cultural situation we live outside and inside school and the role that community plays in learning (Bloome & Green, 1984:395-421).

#### **2.1.1.4 Whole Language**

One of the most influential movements in the 1980s came in the form of whole language which owes its essential character and key principles to the insights of linguistics, psycholinguistics, cognitive psychology, sociolinguistics, and literary theory (Goodman, 1989). According to Pearson (2000), the impact of whole language was regarded as the most significant movement in reading curriculum in the last thirty years. Gone was the teacher- centered approach. The teacher was now the facilitator while the child occupied center stage. The teacher’s role was to observe what children do, decide what they need,

and arrange conditions to allow students to discover insights about reading, writing, and learning for themselves. In the whole language classroom, reading materials consisted of books, magazines, newspapers and other forms of print related to their everyday lives. Skills and strategies were taught in “mini-lessons” and followed up by immediate re-contextualization of the skills taught (Pearson, 2000:24).

Unlike earlier periods, reading was now regarded as a meaning-making, instead of a perceptual, process. The focus shifted to the reader as an active participant in creating, not a passive recipient of the message in a text. What the process of acquiring reading was concern, it was vastly different from the “readiness” perspective that dominated the first eighty years of the century (Pearson, 2000:24). Emergent literacy, which surfaced as an alternative to traditional reading readiness views, did not specify a “pre-reading” period in which children are prepared for the task of reading. The perception in whole language was that readers, at all stages, were meaning makers, even those who can only scribble a message or “pretend” read (Clay, 1966).

Although the whole language movement seemed to be taking up its position of conventional wisdom for the field, it was heavily criticized by scholars and teachers alike who raised a number of concerns about the assumptions and practices of the whole language movement (Gambrell et al. 1999). Not only did their concerns originate from the downgrading of skills and the assumption that skills are best “caught” during authentic reading activities rather than “taught” directly and explicitly, but the strategy instruction lessons from the 1980s were also found to be non-existent in the basal readers of the early to middle 1990s. Content area reading also suffered during the dominance of whole language and literature-based reading. Content area texts—expository texts in general, but especially textbook-like entries—were not advantaged in a world of literature-based reading (Schoenbach, et al., 1999).

Another concern was the confusion of whole language with whole-class instruction. The reason that prevailed in many classrooms was that it was better to keep the entire class together, all experiencing the same texts even if it meant that the teacher had to read the text to those children who lacked the skills to read it on their own (Martin & Hiebert, 1999). This practice was based on the assumptions: (1) that getting the content of the stories is the most important goal for reading instruction, and (2) that the skills and processes needed to read independently will emerge somehow from this environment in which many students are pulled through texts that far exceed the grasp of their current skills repertoire. Whole language had given teachers extensive opportunity to make their

own curricular and instructional decisions, however, many teachers unfortunately lacked the necessary professional development which would enable them to tailor their reading programs and activities to cater for the needs and interests of individual children.

Whole language steadily lost ground as the dissatisfaction grew amongst practitioners in classrooms, and even those sympathetic voices who once advocated the whole language movement, distanced themselves from the philosophical and curricular principles of the movement. Therefore when a political campaign against the whole language began in the middle 1990s, it accelerated the demise of whole language as conventional wisdom by counteracting the unchecked acceptance of whole language as the approach to use with any and all students. One of the authors, David Pearson (1996) details many of these concerns and arguments about whole language in *Reclaiming the Center in The First R: Every Child's Right to Read* (1996).

### **2.1.2 A definition of reading**

Reading is much more than print on paper, it's what Grabe (1988:56) describes as "a dialogue between the reader and the text", it's an active cognitive process in which the reader's background knowledge plays a key role in the creation of meaning (Tierney & Pearson 1994), and it consists of both decoding and comprehension (Pretorius & Ribbens, 2005: 139). Urquhart & Weir (1998:34) state that reading ability should supersede "pure" language skills and include the readers' background knowledge of the world and their pragmatic knowledge and skills. In a later publication, Grabe & Stoller (2002:9) describe reading as "the skill to draw meaning from a printed page and interpret this information appropriately". These definitions shape and refine the initial descriptions of reading by adding that the reader should be able to "draw information from a text and combine it with information and expectations that the reader already has" (Grabe & Stoller, 2001:188).

From the above descriptions of reading it is clear that it is a complicated process, with the emphasis on the interaction between the reader and the text with the ultimate goal being comprehension. To achieve this interaction between the reader and the text Carrell (1988:1) indicates that second language reading should no longer be regarded as the passive process that it has been in the past, with the text "controlling the reader" (Goodman, 1994: 1061), but as an active or more likely, an interactive process. Goodman (1967) states that readers construct meaning from a text by sampling from syntactic,



semantic, grapho-phonetic and pragmatic cues systems in a recursive, adjustable fashion that uses the least amount of information necessary in order to comprehend the text. Supporting this statement are the Schema-driven models of reading by declaring that the readers' background knowledge of the topic, text, and context affects their reading process and comprehension. Investigations done by Carrell (1984b, 1987) and Barnett (1989) on the effectiveness and the importance of formal schemata for second language reading conclude that not only does activating content information play a major role in students' comprehension and recall of information from a text, it also seems to be a significant independent contributor to reading ability.

Although Goodman (1988:16) validates the top-down approach, which perceives the reader as an active participant (as opposed to a passive decoder) in reading, Eskey (1986:13) notes that a top-down model of reading is essentially a model of the skillful, fluent reader for whom perception and decoding have become automatic, and does not account for all the needs of students who are still acquiring reading skills. The point Eskey is making here is important to second language readers who may benefit from an increased focus on bottom-up (decoding) processing where reading is "a clear-cut process [involving] precise, detailed, sequential perception and identification of letters, words, spelling patterns and larger language units" Eskey (1986:13) – in other words, it is text driven. However, the problem Stanovich (1980) has with the bottom-up model is the fact that it is "difficult to account for sentence-context properties and the role of preceding knowledge of text topic as facilitating variables in word recognition and comprehension". Similarly, Eskey (1973:3) states that the decoding model (the top-down and bottom-up concepts form part of a reading model that constructs reading as decoding the symbols on the page) is insufficient since it miscalculates the impact of the reader who makes predictions and processes information. Carrell (1988:239) strongly supports the views of Stanovich and Eskey, and he warns that overreliance on either mode has been found to cause reading difficulties for second language readers.

In order to address the concerns of reading theorists, Rumelhart (1984) came up with an interactive model which is an interaction of the bottom-up and top-down processing skills. In the interactive model both the reader and the text play a role. The interactive model acknowledges that lower level processing skills are essential for fluent and accurate reading; it also emphasizes that as bottom-up processing becomes more automatic, higher-level skills will become more engaged. Efficient and effective reading entails both processes interacting simultaneously, in spite of the fact that the "field today is strongly



influenced by top-down processing perspectives" (Carrell, 1988). For Davies (1995:66) the interactive model is ideal because it creates room for reader differences as well as lending support to beginner readers.

Reading does not occur in a vacuum, nor does it happen in a neutral context because reading is embedded "in the social, political, cultural, and historical contexts of the reading event" (Serafini, 2003:9). Reynolds et al. (1982), state that "culture influences knowledge, beliefs, and values; and that knowledge, beliefs, and values influence comprehension processes" (Reynolds et al 1982:354). What Reynolds is saying with the above statement is that a particular cultural experience would prepare a child to understand the literature from that culture. Therefore, if there is a close link between the literature and the culture of the child, the child's schema will enable comprehension. Nonetheless, reading is not only shaped by a reader's cultural context, but by the social process as well. For Bloome & Green (1984: 395), reading as a social process is used to "structure and maintain social relationships between people". It is therefore this social process, (communicating purposes and meanings between people involved in a reading event) that shapes the reader's knowledge, skills and experiences and most probably could enable the reader to create various meanings, instead of a single text-driven perspective.

For Serafini (2003:9) the reader is playing a central role in the construction of meaning, drawing upon prior knowledge and experience to attend selectively to specific aspects of a text; known as the transactional model of reading. The "transaction" takes place between the reader and the text in which the reader interprets a personal meaning of the text: it is thus not only cognitive, but subjective. (This is also referred to as the reader's schema and is discussed more fully in section 2.3.4). Reading, (with comprehension) therefore depends on the reader and what knowledge and experience she/he brings to the text, his/her attitudes and cultural, social, political and cultural values. Serafini (2003:9) summarises the complexity as follows:

"...reading is not a set of decontextualized cognitive skills that can be universally transmitted via commercial reading exercises. Rather, reading is a social practice that is constrained, mediated, and shaped by the social forces inherent in a particular community of readers. Meaning does not just loosely arise in neutral contexts; it is grounded in the social, political, cultural, and historical contexts of the reading event. Readers are individuals in society, unable to escape from the contexts in which they live and read, but capable of rendering unique interpretations as they transact with particular texts at particular times".

With this explanation of reading by Serafini, we become conscious of the fact that reading is much more than just words on a page, but it is an amalgamation of cognitive, personal and affective aspects. We also become aware of the fact that a reader's background can limit and control the reader and even enforce standards. Subsequently, children who have been exposed to literature rich environments are more likely to make the necessary connections between what they read and the world as opposed to those readers who live in an environment where there is no reading culture.

## **2.2 READING IN A SECOND LANGUAGE**

### **2.2.1 What constitutes reading in a second language?**

Research on reading in a second language (L2), with respect to both cognitive and socio-cultural aspects, has undergone a similar history as first- language reading (L1 reading) in recent years, a trend which has been documented in reviews by Bernhardt (1991), Carrell, Devine, & Eskey (1988). According to Koda & Zehler (2008:5) reading is a multifaceted process with diverse sub-skills which are needed to successfully make meaning of a reading text. Even though some reading processes are believed to be universal, Goodman (1971:37) points out that reading in a second language may place additional demands on the reader because they require L2 language and cultural proficiency as well as prior literacy experiences and beliefs for reading in the additional language to be successful.

For many learners throughout the world, second language reading is their first literacy. Subsequently, for these learners, reading in a second language is both a language challenge and a reading challenge since they are confronted with learning literacy and learning it in a language that they do not fully command. Therefore Alderson (1984) states, "many second language learners, even those advanced in their knowledge of L2 grammar and vocabulary, are reported to perform poorly on various types of L2 reading tasks (skimming, scanning, critical reading, summarizing, etc.) when functioning as students in institutions for vocational training or in colleges and universities". Second-language reading seems to be influenced by numerous non-linguistic factors. Such factors include the influences of the reader's perceptions of reading in the L1 and L2 as mentioned by Carrell (1987), the perception of himself/ herself as a reader and the degree to which L1 reading processes and strategies transfer to the L2.

For Bernhardt (1991:169-171) it is evident that, "L1 literacy is a significant component in L2 reading. The more literate L2 learners are, the higher the probability that they will use

L1 reading strategies while performing on L2 reading tasks". She further views literacy variables as "operational knowledge that refers to knowing how to approach text, why one approaches it, and what to do with it when a text is approached". This interdependence between L2 and L1 reading proficiency Bernhardt talks about noticeably operates in the dimension of literacy knowledge as well as in the dimension of world knowledge, more so than in the dimension of linguistic knowledge of the second language. Bernhardt further points out readers should be allowed to use the literacy skills they already possess and teachers should build their instruction on recognition of how learners understand L2 texts on the basis of their L1 literacy skills. Bernhardt's linguistic argument has reference to the cross-linguistic transfer model of Koda & Zehler (2008) where readers transfer what they know about reading in one language to reading in another language. However, there is no definite agreement amongst researchers concerning the exact transfer path of literacy skills. While researchers like Kesckes (2000) claims that L2 influences L1, both Cummins (1983) and Clay (1991:2) claim that the transfer of literacy skills can occur in both directions. Cummins (1979) developed the "threshold hypothesis" which assumes that the level of competence already reached by the student in his/ her first language determines if he or she will experience cognitive insufficiencies or benefits from schooling in the second language. Cummins (1979:229) is of the opinion that unless L2 readers have reached the "threshold" level of L2 competence and skill, those readers will be unable to make considerable progress as L2 readers. Similar to the "threshold hypothesis" of Cummins, is the "language ceiling" Clarke (1979) talks about when he states that a "certain amount" of L2 language control is needed before transfer of reading strategies can possibly transpire. Due to a lacking of L2 knowledge the expert L1 readers become poor L2 readers, who "regress back to poor reading behaviours similar to that of poor L1 readers when they are faced with a difficult task in the second language" (Clarke, 1980:206).

From the evolution of second language reading research, it is clear that reading is a complex social and psycholinguistic process that cannot be separated into reading components and language components and as such it is important to recognize that second language reading is a new and different literacy. In their quest to understand L2 reading, researchers first turned their attention to cognitive psychology and L1 models of reading. L2 reading researchers such as Coady (1979) and Jolly (1978) applied the psycholinguistic model of Goodman (1967) and the schema-driven model of Rumelhart (1984). Both these models agree that reading is an active process of meaning construction between the reader, writer, and text. Carrell (1988b) has also argued that a

lack of schema activation is one major source of processing difficulty with second language readers.

Although most L2 reading research is grounded in the theory that L2 learners already have an L1 reading framework to refer to, the reality is that the majority of learners have not developed the skill to read extensive and non-fiction texts. This is especially noticeable in our multilingual/ multicultural classrooms where many learners come from rural areas and most probably did not have the chance to develop reading competencies in the language of learning and teaching. Not only does the lack of exposure to literature have an influence on readers becoming skilled in their L2, many other factors, that will be discussed below, also play a role (see 2.3.1-2.3.5 for a discussion of factors influencing reading in the second language).

### **2.2.2 THE ROLE OF ENGLISH IN SOUTH AFRICA**

English has undeniably cemented its status as a world language of communication and economic power. Although the South African Constitution (108 of 1996) has awarded official status and equity to the eleven languages spoken in South Africa, it is a far cry from the linguistic reality in South African schools and professional environments where English has established itself as a “global language”. English as a language of global communication, power and economic access has made it a major “linguistic dynamism and object of desire” (Visagie, 2010:1). It would seem that English has become the preferred language of learning and teaching (LoLT) in schools despite the fact that the Additive Approach to Multilingualism policy as set out in The Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS, 2002:4) assumes that learners will maintain their home language while learning at least one additional language.

Even though additive bilingualism, (the acquisition of an additional language, while maintaining the home language which has a complementary effect on the learner’s cognitive and social development), is encouraged in the South African educational setting, this is not what realises in classrooms. The truth is that isiXhosa learners (including those at the research school) are exposed to what Alexander (2000:15) refers to as “subtractive bilingualism”. Because the learners’ first language is substituted for English as a medium of learning and teaching, the results are disastrous. Firstly, these [isiXhosa] learners find themselves in a subtractive language learning environment where English becomes the LoLT after a maximum of three years instruction in the home language. Despite researchers like Obanya (2004:22) who proposes that an additional language should not

be introduced before the mother tongue has been well developed and mastered by the learner, the status of English results in many isiXhosa parents preferring to place their children in schools where English is the LoLT. This approach by the parents could have serious effects on the cognitive- and social development of these learners. According to Roseberry-McKibbin & Eicholtz (1994:161), if schools do not support mother tongue development, the home language will deteriorate, the additional language will not develop sufficiently and this will result in learners having low to no proficiency in both the home language and the additional language. This rings true for the researcher, who is confronted by learners who display a serious lack of proficiency in both English and isiXhosa language proficiency.

Alexander (2000) points out that most black South Africans have come to believe that they have to learn English to overcome their “deficit”. In other words, Black South African parents see English as a means “to better their livelihoods” and “open the doors to prosperity” (De Klerk, 2000). Therefore, Banda (2004:7) states that parents demand that their children be taught through English in Black townships as soon as possible. The fact that English has risen to an even higher status than during apartheid, at the cost of all of the other languages in South Africa could be observed in the manner which black learners flocked to Model C schools when it opened for all races, cultures and languages. Trading their mother tongue for English has placed these learners at a disadvantage, forsaking the critical development of their mother tongue necessary to master the language of the school. These learners struggle academically and the reason can be what Fleish (2008:105) calls a “lack of deep understanding” of their first language. Cummins (1991:166-167) also states the following, “if a learner has cognitive and academic proficiency in the mother tongue this will transfer to and aid in the acquisition of cognitive and academic proficiency in the additional language”.

In another study done by Roseberry-McKibben & Brice (2000:5), both are of the opinion that skills and knowledge which are developed in the first language will be transferred to the additional language (in this case English) as the language of learning and teaching and this additional language will build on the underlying conceptual-linguistic foundation of the mother tongue. This conclusion of Roseberry- McKibben & Brice is based on Cummins’ Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) theory (1981:29), which states that:

“To the extent that instruction in Language x (home language) is effective in promoting proficiency in Language x (home language), transfer of this proficiency to Language y (the

additional language) will occur provided there is adequate exposure to Language y (the additional language) either in school or the home environment and that there is adequate motivation to learn Language y (the additional language)".

Currently the new Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) which has been introduced in 2012 requires that learners be exposed to English texts as early as Grade 1 when they start schooling in the Foundation Phase unlike the past where English texts were introduced from Grade Four. According to McLaughlin (1984) many researchers believe that there is "little benefit and potential harm in introducing a second language at a very young age unless caregivers are careful to maintain both languages as equally important and valuable". He further notes that ultimate retention of two languages depends on a large number of factors, such as the prestige of the languages, cultural pressures, motivation, opportunities of use but not on age of acquisition (McLaughlin, 1984:73). Despite the fact that English has risen to a high status language in South Africa, it is unlikely that it will be the medium of communication in communities that speak a language other than English. This scenario limits their "exposure to and use of English as medium of communication" (Roseberry-McKibbin, 2001). Whilst the role of South African schools is to generate English speaking learners, ready to take up their places in an English dominated society, educators, on the other hand, face a number of challenges that prohibit them from reaching these goals. Due to overloaded classes educators find it difficult to effectively interact with learners who need support in learning English. Sometimes these educators possess "limited English proficiency" (Mati, 2003) and have been "inadequately trained to be able to address the barriers learners experience" (Cele, 2001) in learning English. Nel (2004) further stresses that "no tailor-made comprehensive South African classroom preventative intervention program for supporting ESL learners with limited English proficiency is available".

## **2.3 FACTORS INFLUENCING ENGLISH L2 READERS**

### **2.3.1 Introduction: The characteristics of a good reader**

Fluency in reading encompasses automaticity of word recognition, familiarity with text structure and topic, awareness of various reading strategies, and conscious use and control of these strategies in processing a text (Pang, 2008:1). Research by Just & Carpenter (1987) reveals that good readers process over 80% of content words and 40% of function words on the page. These words are read by good readers in an effortless manner without resorting to guessing or making use of context and background

knowledge. Good readers seem to use text structure to enable the recall of the main ideas in the text as well as total comprehension and recall. Meyer & Rice (1984) define text structure as ". . . how the ideas in a text are interrelated to convey a message to a reader". Winograd & Bridge (1986) and Afflerbach (1986) have found that good readers achieve their reading task in three ways:

By using their general world knowledge and domain-specific knowledge to allow access to and evaluation of the content of the text;

By using their knowledge of author biases, intentions, and goals to help determine importance; and

By using their knowledge of text structure to help them identify and organize information.

Not only are good readers better than poor readers at reading, they are also better at monitoring, controlling, and adapting their strategic processes while reading. Unlike poor readers who are much less aware of problems that exist and how to solve them (Baker & Brown, 1984), good readers know what to do when they encounter a problem. In monitoring, they anticipate that problems will arise, and they take action to solve them when they do (Raphael et al. 1980). Monitoring differentiates the skilled from the novice reader. Expert readers use their supply of existing knowledge as well as a number of flexible strategies to construct a mental model of the text. Whenever comprehension breaks down, skilled readers have the ability to change their strategies. In contrast to poor readers who tend to use only one approach to answering questions, namely a simple text-matching or answer-grabbing strategy (Pearson & Johnson, 1978), good readers adjust their strategy selection and their metacognitive awareness depending on their level of domain-specific knowledge (Alexander & Judy, 1988).

Lastly, both Paris & Paris (2001:92) as well as Grabe & Stoller (2001:188) assert that in order to understand reading, it is valuable to examine the attributes of fluent readers. Therefore they believe that good readers:

- Are active, engaged readers who vary their own purpose for reading;
- Engage in a variety of questioning strategies before, during and after reading;
- Know how to predict continuously throughout the reading;
- Monitor their comprehension as they read;
- Know a variety of strategies to regain comprehension in difficult texts; and
- Reflect on what they have learned in order to use the new information in the future.

These characteristics give us the necessary foil to understanding the problems faced by the isiXhosa learners who are involved in this study.



### **2.3.2 Socio-cultural factors**

The pivotal influence of culture and society on the language of communities cannot be denied. Culture embraces the habits, customs, social behaviour, knowledge and assumptions associated with a group of people. Kramsch (1998:127) defines culture as “membership in a discourse community that shares a common social space and history, a common system of standards for perceiving, believing, evaluation and action”. The impact culture and society has on language is clearly evident at the multi-cultural school where this research project was conducted. Being a multi-cultural school, divergent social, cultural, linguistic and economic backgrounds can be observed. Not only does this apply to the learners (whose home languages are predominantly Afrikaans and isiXhosa) but it is also applicable to the educators who originate from the white, coloured or black cultural groups.

Eskey (1986:4-5) points out that the second language reader unescapably belongs to a culture with concepts about reading that might be vastly different from our own. This rings true for the research school, where the majority of the learners are from a black or coloured culture with a strong oral tradition. It is quite clear that these learners come from under-resourced literary environments (as reported at 5.3.1.1.3) and therefore have no reading culture; and so a reading culture has to be developed. Teachers should be mindful of these inadequacies and of the disadvantaging factors when teaching reading.

### **2.3.3 Motivation and attitude**

Students’ motivation to learn a second language depends on their needs and interests, while the effectiveness of their learning is influenced by motivation. However, motivation to learn a second language is not a simple concept. One of the most recent theories of second language learning and the role of motivation in that process is that of Dörnyei & Otto (1998). Their model aims to present a comprehensive, process-oriented perspective on motivation and includes the concept of integrativeness as part of the motivational influences on goal-setting (Dörnyei, 2001:93). “The main foundations of the criticism of the notion of integrativeness are the simplex views of the identity of second languages learners and the incorrect assumptions made about the sociolinguistic contexts of many learners of English as a second language across the world” (Coetzee Van-Rooy, 2006:441). However, the notion of integrativeness, has been criticised by the simplex views of the identity of second languages learners by critics, e.g., Agnihotri & Khanna (1997: 333-336), Norton (2000), Coetzee-Van Rooy (2000) and Lamb (2004). According to



MacIntyre et al. (2001:462) "Gardner's socio-educational model suggests that motivation is based in large part on inter-group attitudes and attraction to the target language and culture". Gardner also states that the acquisition of a second language is a true social psychological phenomenon in that it is concerned with the development of communication skills between an individual and members of another cultural community" (Gardner & Tremblay, 1998: 31). While studying the root of motivation to learn a second language, Gardner is of the opinion that both the Educational context and Cultural context should be considered. In chapter 1 and 4 the issues of educational and cultural context are shown to affect the learners who participated in this study.

#### **2.3.4 A reader's schema**

According to Nunan (1999: 201), "schema theory is based on the notion that past experiences lead to the creation of mental frameworks that help us make sense of new experiences". This means that past experiences will be related to new experiences, which may include the knowledge of "objects, situations, and events as well as knowledge of procedures for retrieving, organizing and interpreting information" (Kucer, 1987:31). For Anderson & Pearson (1988), comprehension is the interaction between old and new information. They are both of the opinion that the most important aspect of schema theory relating to comprehension is "seeing the significance of the parts to the whole" (Anderson & Pearson, 1988). Additionally, Anderson, Spiro & Anderson (1978:439) note that "the schemata a person already possesses are a principal determiner of what will be learned from a new text". This implies that without an existing schema learning new information about that schema is difficult. This is logical in the case of students with different background knowledge. Decoding abilities are essential, but will not increase comprehension without a strong foundation for the new information to build upon.

Casanave (1988: 283) is of the opinion that successful reading comprehension not only depends on readers' ability to access appropriate content (the message of the text) and formal schemata (the different structural organization of texts), but it also depends on their ability to monitor what they understand. Difficulties in comprehension may be the result of a lack of background knowledge needed to understand the reading text and therefore Bransford (1994) agrees with Carrell (1988: 248) that the responsibility of the teacher is to activate existing schemata or build new background knowledge to help learners integrate the new knowledge into their existing schemata. It is imperative to note that the reader plays a key role in the construction of meaning. Therefore, in selecting readings that will

motivate the reader, the educator needs to consider the reader's age, gender, experience and culture. When the texts to be read have a cultural context that is different than the student's, formal and content schemata become even more important. Furthermore, people outside a given culture may misunderstand events with unfamiliar cultural connotations. This is a problem particularly in standardized tests that may assume common schemata for students from different cultural backgrounds. This aspect was a particular problem when texts had to be selected for the intervention proposed in this study. How the selection was managed, is discussed in section 5.5.1 and 5.8.1.

### **2.3.5 Parental involvement**

Parental involvement is one of the most important factors that can enhance a learners' ability to succeed academically. Historically, parents have been "portrayed as both friend and foe" and weren't always welcome, according to Peressini (1998:571). Even today parent-school relations are seen as a power struggle. Bettencourt (1982) further states that parents were seen as a "hindrance" to their children's academic success because they were not educated and they did not value the same things that the school did. The situation described above leads one to ask the question whether parents are still kept at a distance from schools. The answer is a resounding no. According to Alldred & Edwards (2000), parents and schools are seen by policy makers as having similar functions when it comes to children. With reference to the research school, parental involvement is encouraged through teacher- parent meetings, coaching of sport codes, governing body participation, informative letters to parents and parent-teacher association. The open door policy of the principal is a testimony of a standing invitation to encourage parents to have the opportunity to voice any academic or social concerns they may have about their children.

Although the doors of the research school are opened wide to welcome parents to a partnership, sadly few adhere to the call. The low attendance of parents at teacher-parent meetings is a painful manifestation of the fact that the majority of parents may not realise the importance of taking an active interest in the academic welfare of their children. Once again, the situation at the research school begs for another question to be asked: What reasons prevent parents from being more involved in the education of their children? Some of these barriers could be lack of education, feeling unwelcome, time and travel constraints, or in the researcher's observation, language barriers. (The majority of the parents are isiXhosa speakers with little or no English speaking ability.) It is evident that a

lot of reasons can constrain parents' involvement in the education of their children, but it is also true, from the researcher's experience at the research school, that parental involvement has different degrees of importance to different parents. At the research school it is our observation that the parents whose children are academically sound are the ones who are actively involved in every aspect of their children's education, whereas the parents who really need to be involved in their children's studies are reluctant to become involved.

### **2.3.6 A theoretical synthesis for reading in an additional language**

Acquiring reading skills in an additional language cannot be viewed as a simple process. It is rather a complex process that requires both cognitive and social skills. For this reason the theoretical orientation in this research study is based on Bandura's (1986, 2001) Social- Cognitive theory which is best suited to achieving the objective of this study- which is to implement reading strategy instruction (in a social, i.e. classroom setting) that could lead to improving reading comprehension (which is a cognitive process). A discussion of the Cognitive and Social Perspectives that drive reading strategy instruction follow below.

#### **2.3.6.1 The Cognitive perspective in reading**

The Cognitive perspective regards the mind as "central to learning" (Graves, Juel & Graves, 1998:4) and therefore it moved away from the notion that reading is a perceptual process based solely on word recognition and decoding. For Cognitivists reading is an "intrapersonal problem-solving task that takes place within the brain's knowledge structures" (Bernhardt, 1991:6). The Cognitive view of reading as a constructive process (Pearson & Stephens, 1998:86), where the reader makes sense of what is encountered in the text based on what he already knows, has had considerable influence on the teaching of reading and how children learn to read. Research during the Cognitive era by numerous researchers (e.g. Palincsar & Brown, 1984, Pressley & Harris, 1990, Pressley, 2001, 2005 and Snow, 2002a) focused strongly on comprehension strategies and emphasized the value of research-based reading instruction that could lead to improvement in readers' reading comprehension. The cognitive perspective brought an important swing in the focus to readers' cognitive processes and a greater focus on structural characteristics of text (Pearson & Stephens, 1998: 87).

According to Snow (2002a: xiii-xiv) readers bring "cognitive capabilities such as attention, memory, critical analytical ability" to the reading process. Not only do readers bring their

cognitive capabilities to the reading process, they also bring their social contexts, especially in a multicultural and multilingual teaching environment as the research school where this study takes place.

### **2.3.6.2 Social perspective in reading**

Reading is not just a cognitive process, but as previously mentioned (2.3.6.1) a social process as well. Sociolinguists believe knowledge and language are socially and culturally constructed processes, incorporating not only readers' prior knowledge, but also the meanings constructed by peers and by one's cultural ancestors (Pearson, 2000:17). The social perspective in reading can be identified with Bandura's (1986, 2001) Social-Cognitive theory where he explains human functioning in terms of a model of triadic reciprocity. According to Bandura (1986:18) "behaviour, cognitive and environmental events are interacting determinates of each other" and therefore his theory [s]ubscribes to a model of "emergent interactive agency" (Bandura, 2001:13). Social learning, according to Bandura (1986:47), is fostered by observing the actual performance of others and the consequences of their actions and then adjusting one's behaviour accordingly. Bandura (1986:51) further states that learning is largely an "information-process activity" and humans acquire behaviour patterns from people they observe. This process is significant for this study, since learners observe the teacher modelling reading strategies, they try them out and learn from each other as they make meaning of texts.

Reading as a social process is used to "establish, structure and maintain social relationships between and among people" (Bloome & Green, 1984:395). Where the Cognitive perspective views the aim of reading as finding and constructing meaning from text (Graves, Juel & Graves, 1998:2), the Social perspective proposes that the reader's social context shapes his construction of knowledge, and therefore by developing skills and experiences, to derive multiple meanings from the text, in contrast to a single, author-driven meaning (Chapman, 2006:115).

Street (1984) warns educators not to take a sovereign view of reading- in other words, a "one size fits all" approach (Street, 1984:2), but to consider that attitudes and meaning of the text differ from one community to another depending on the social context in which it is used. Therefore Street & Lefstein (2008:62) are of the opinion that teachers should be "more sensitive to the variety of backgrounds and language styles learners bring with them" and should not impose a "single standard on all". Klapwijk (2011:48) states that the social aspect of language learning is extremely important in South African classrooms

considering the linguistic and cultural diversity that can be found in a single class. I agree with Klapwijk (2011:48) when she further states that teachers of multicultural and multilingual classes need to take cognisance of “the impact of social, cultural and historical factors on learners’ knowledge and attitudes they bring to the learning situation” in order to assist teachers in choosing the appropriate methodology and learning material for teaching and assessing reading successfully.

## 2.4 CURRENT READING REALITY IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS

### 2.4.1 Poor literacy performances of South African learners

#### 2.4.1.1 Results in the Western Cape

On 20 January 2012, Donald Grant, Minister of Education in the Western Cape, had the following to say in his Media Release Statement, *“Literacy and Numeracy are the most important skills our children will develop in their school career. If we are to achieve our objectives of improving learner outcomes and the quality of education in the province, it is imperative that we develop and deepen the reading, writing and calculating abilities of all our learners”*. This statement was released by the minister following the results of the Literacy and Numeracy systemic tests conducted in 2011 by the Centre for Evaluation and Assessment (CEA), an autonomous research unit within the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria. In 2011, over 239 000 Grade 3, 6 and 9 learners took part in these tests.

The number of learners per grade was as follows:

Grade 3 - 79 109

Grade 6 - 78 288

Grade 9 - 81 936

The results were as follows:

Grade	% Pass rate in 2011
Grade 3 Literacy	30.4%
Grade 6 Language	31.5%
Grade 9 Language	44.2%

Table 1: Literacy and Language results

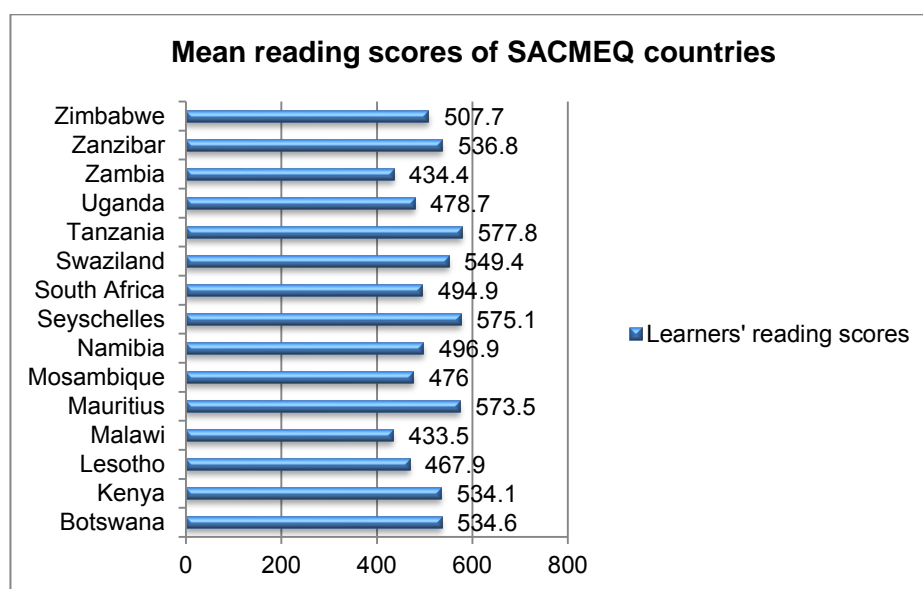
For many years the results have been indicating that our learners are not numerate and literate at the appropriate level for their grade. For the systemic tests, the WCED have a pass requirement of 50%, and judging from the above results it is clear that once again the

desired outcomes have not been met by the various grades. For the 2011 Grade 3 literacy and Grade 6 language tests, the CEA expanded the tests, as well as increased their levels of difficulty in order to be in line with international experience and best practice. Having done that, the past results of previous years are no longer a measurement for comparison and therefore the literacy results of Grade 3 and the language results of Grade 6 must be considered as a benchmark for future comparisons. A pilot test was conducted for Grade 9 in 2010, and the first tests were written in 2011. Therefore the results of the Grade 9 language and mathematics tests of 2011 will also set new benchmarks for future comparisons. However, it is the schools prerogative to compare their own performances with their peers by looking at the district and provincial performance ratio.

#### 2.4.1.2 National and International Assessment Studies

Despite the attempts by several ministers of education to promote the importance of reading and maths in schools through numerous policies and curriculums, South African learners keep performing at a very low level, more so against international countries. Literacy studies that have been done by the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2006 placed South Africa's Grade 4 learners at the bottom of the other 72 participating countries (Howie et al., 2007). Figure 2 below displays the mean reading scores of the SACMEQ countries.

Figure 1: Mean reading scores of all the SACMEQ countries



Source: SACMEQ Data, 2007

The above figure displays the mean reading scores of the Grade 6 learners in all participating SACMEQ countries. In 2007 the Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ III, 2007) conducted a Grade 6 reading survey and the

results, which provide information on pupils' mean reading scores, placed Tanzania (577.8), Seychelles (575.1) and Mauritius (573.5) at the top, whilst South Africa (494.9) scored lower than countries like Zanzibar (536), Botswana (534.6), Kenya (543.1) and even Zimbabwe with a mean reading score of 507.7. The following figure displays the results of the Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality's (SACMEQ) assessment of Grade 6 learners' mean reading scores per province in South Africa for both 2005 and 2007 as follows:

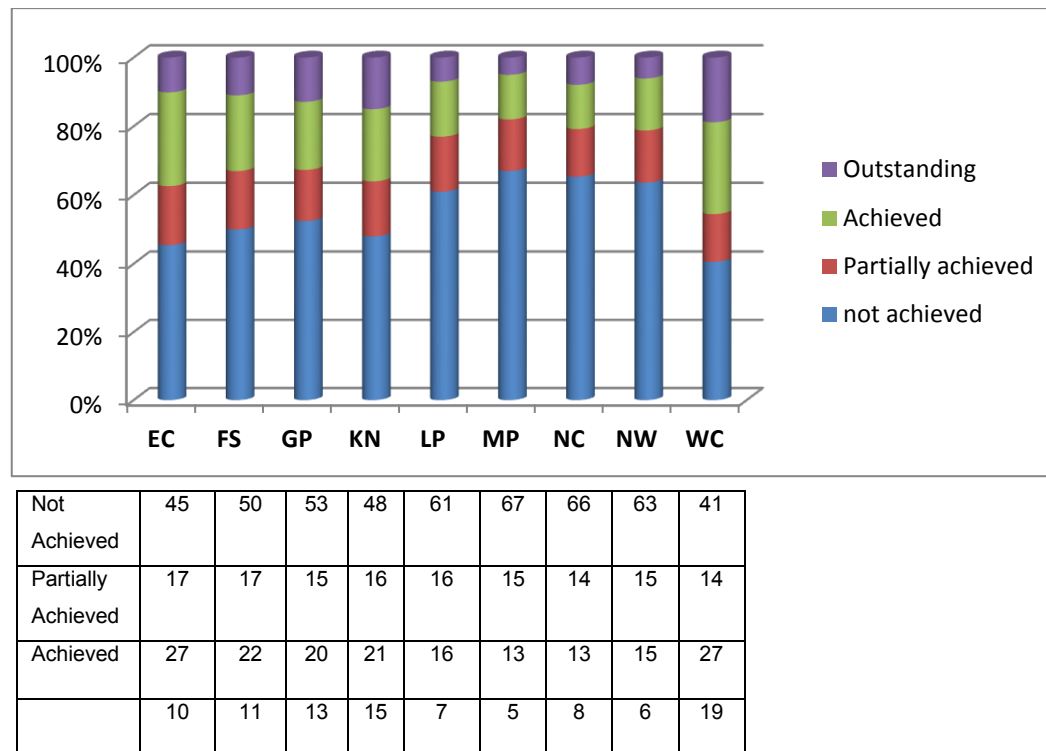
*Table 2:* Comparison between the Grade 6 pupil mean reading scores per province as done by SACMEQ III Project 2007

Province	2005	2007
Eastern Cape	444.3	447.8
Free State	446.4	491.1
Gauteng	576.3	573.1
Kwazulu Natal	517.5	485.6
Mpumalanga	428.4	473.6
Northern Cape	470.5	505.6
Limpopo	437.0	425.3
North West	428.0	506.3
Western Cape	629.1	583.4
<b>South Africa</b>	<b>492.4</b>	<b>494.9</b>

Source: SACMEQ, Data, 2005 and 2007

The results presented in Table 2 indicate that, for South Africa overall, there is a slight improvement in the mean reading scores of Grade 6 learners in 2007 compared to the scores in 2005. Unfortunately both scores were below the pre-determined mean Rasch score of 500. However, three provinces exceeded the mean Rasch score in 2005, namely, Western Cape, Gauteng and KwaZulu Natal. In 2007 provinces like North West and Northern Cape performed better, whilst KwaZulu Natal is showing a regression in their performance level in 2007 compared to their performance level in 2005. The poor performances of Mpumalanga and Limpopo learners in the 2007 SACMEQ reading assessment are cause for concern. Not only did these provinces perform the worst, they also performed poorly in the 2011 Annual National Assessments (ANA) compared to the other provinces. Confirmation of this statement can be observed in the distribution of the learners' achievement levels in the following two illustrations:

Figure 2: Distribution of Grade 3 learners' achievement level in Literacy, with breakdown of provinces.



Source: ANA, Data, 2011

Figure 3: Distribution of Grade 6 learners' achievement level in Literacy, with breakdown of provinces.



Source: ANA, Data, 2011



In September 2012, 7 million learners across more than 24 000 schools wrote the ANA (Department of Basic Education, 2012:1). The results of the ANA tests paint a bleak picture of the current literacy competence in our primary schools. The significant conclusion is that in 2011, learner performances were still far below what it should have been, especially given the fact that the Department of Education is pulling out all the stops to improve learner achievement in South Africa.

The average percentage marks in Home Language (HL) and First Additional Language (FAL) in the various grades are presented in *Tables 3 and 4*. It is important to note that direct comparisons across years can only be done with extreme caution, as the Language test used in 2011 in Grades 1-6, was pitched at the level of the language of learning and teaching. In 2012, however, two tests were set, one at Home Language level and the other at First Additional Language level in Grades 4-6 and 9. Only one test was written at Home Language level by Grades 1, 2 and 3 learners (Department of Basic Education, 2012:22).

The following tables (Table 3 and 4) present the average percentage marks for Languages in 2011 and 2012.

*Table 3: National average percentage marks for Language in 2011 and 2012 (Grades 1-3)*

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Home Language 2012</b>	<b>Language 2011</b>
1	58%	59%
2	55%	52%
3	52%	35%

*Table 4: National average percentage marks for Language in 2011 and 2012 (Grades 4-6 & 9)*

<b>Grade</b>	<b>First Additional Language 2012</b>	<b>Language 2011</b>
4	34%	34%
5	30%	28%
6	36%	28%
9	35%	

*Grade 9 was not part of ANA 2011. Source: ANA, Data, 2012:22)*

When the Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motsekga, announced the results of the Annual National Assessment for 2012 she stated the following, “It is important to note that while there has been some improvement in the achievement of learning outcomes in most grades in 2012, we still have a long way to go towards realising the desired 60% threshold of learners mastering the minimum Language and Mathematics competencies by the end of Grades 3, 6 and 9” (Department of Basic Education, 2012:1).

## **2.5 CONCLUSION**

This concludes chapter 2, which gave us insight into the history of reading, the many factors influencing reading in a second language as well as discussions about the current reading reality and literacy performance in South African schools. What must be done next in Chapter 3 is to provide a description of research based reading strategies, their classroom value and explore the specific reading comprehension strategies selected for this research intervention.

## CHAPTER 3

### READING STRATEGIES

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the focus shifts to reading strategy instruction. It will be followed by a discussion of reading strategies, a description of the different research-based reading strategies and their value for classroom implementation and lastly, the focus will fall on the specific strategies that were chosen to address the aim of this research intervention as well as different instructional approaches to explicitly teach the participants of the intervention to read with understanding and to provide them with strategies to do so.

##### 3.1.1 Reading Instruction

As has been pointed out in chapter 2, reading is a complex activity which requires a hierarchy of skills, but unfortunately these skills are not mastered by all learners. Poor reading skills are the result of numerous factors, some of which the school has no impact on, e.g. no reading culture at home. However, teachers need to assist poor readers through a well-planned programme of reading instruction. Ediger (2003:138) describes the type of programme that is needed by noting that, “[a]n effective program of reading instruction must meet the needs of pupils individually”. In South Africa this statement places a huge responsibility on the shoulders of the teachers, because our classrooms are filled with learners with diverse abilities, attitudes and interests towards reading. Another factor is the overcrowded classrooms filled with more than fifty learners. Nevertheless, teachers should be aware that “one size does not fit all” and therefore they need to adapt their method of instruction in order to help their learners achieve optimal results in reading.

Although a variety of procedures may be used in reading instruction, Gronlund & Waugh (2009) mention three questions that need to be answered by teachers *before* they design and proceed with effective reading instruction:

- What skills and abilities must students have before the teacher begins instruction? (This question deals with readiness.)
- To what extent will the students master the material included in the planned instruction? (This question deals with placement.)
- How do students feel about their own reading strategy use capabilities? (This question deals with self-efficacy.)

Answers to these questions will help the teachers gather enough information regarding the readiness, placement and self-efficacy of their students and therefore enable them to successfully design instruction to meet the individual needs of their students. The teachers are also in a position to modify instructional plans to meet students' academic and motivation needs or to place students in lower or more advanced level of instruction (Gronlund & Waugh, 2009).

Although a reading curriculum provides the foundation for effective instruction, classroom reading instruction for struggling learners can be adapted by teaching the specific skills and strategies that these students need to learn. Teachers have to make reading instruction more explicit (by clearly modelling skills and strategies) and systematic (where skills are taught in sequence), increase opportunities for practice, provide appropriate text at learners' instructional reading level and monitor learners' mastery of key skills and strategies. For various authors (Ehri, 2003; Rayner, Foorman, Perfetti, Pesetsky & Seidenberg, 2001; Snow et al. 1998), effective classroom reading instruction includes teaching phonemic awareness (in kindergarten and 1st grade, and for older learners who need it). It also includes explicit phonics instruction with opportunities to apply skills in reading, with integrated instruction in fluency, vocabulary and comprehension (Chard, Vaughn, & Tyler, 2002; Jitendra, Edwards, Sacks, & Jacobson, 2004).

### **3.1.2 Reading comprehension instruction**

Being able to comprehend is the ultimate goal of reading. For Graves, Juel & Graves (1998), comprehension refers to the "overall understanding process" whereby meaning is constructed. Not only do readers use their existing knowledge as a filter to interpret and construct meaning of a given text (Anderson & Pearson, 1984), they use this knowledge to determine importance (Afflerbach, 1986), to draw inference (Gordon & Pearson, 1983; Hansen & Pearson, 1983), to elaborate text (Hansen & Pearson, 1983), and to monitor comprehension (Dewitz, Carr, & Patberg, 1987). According to Anderson & Pearson (1988:37), comprehension occurs when a reader has found a "mental home" for the information in the text. Since learners have to comprehend subject matter in most of their academic disciplines, they need to be taught the appropriate skills through comprehension strategy instruction to enable them to understand what is being read. While teaching learners to comprehend by modeling reading strategies – Bandura's "emergent interactive agency" (2001:13) – teachers should keep in mind as pointed out by Smith (2003:13), that not all children develop proficiency at the same pace. Such learners should not be

classified as failures and therefore teachers need to reflect on their teaching methods and find the most effective strategies to provide for those learners who find the instruction more difficult than others.

This is not what Dolores Durkin (1978-1979), one of the most well-known and influential researchers in reading classroom practice observed in classrooms in America. Instead of teaching learners to comprehend through explicit comprehension instruction, teachers resorted to comprehension testing (i.e., asking oral or written questions about the text they have read). In 1995-1996, Pressley, together with his peers, Wharton-McDonald, Hampston & Echevarria (1996) had the same experience when they observed ten fourth- and fifth-grade classrooms in upstate New York. They, too, found little evidence of comprehension instruction; instead the teachers were focused on post-reading comprehension questions. This observation led Pressley to believe that, despite an increase in comprehension research, it seems that little comprehension instruction happened in classrooms around the world (Pressley, 2001:631).

South African classrooms are no different from those described above. Although the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS, 2011:12) places the reading process under pre-reading, reading and post-reading activities, it fails to provide the teachers with explicit comprehension strategy instructions to follow, therefore most teachers readily fall into the habit of asking post-reading questions to assess comprehension texts. These practices have had a negative influence on the results of South Africa's achievements in literacy, language, mathematics and science tests compared to other countries referred to earlier (2.4.1.1 – 4.2.1.2). If we look at the results we can't help but notice that our literacy methods have failed in achieving the required results and therefore we can assume that comprehension instruction does not occur in many classrooms around South Africa. It is evident from the above situation that steps have to be taken by educators to improve the situation in our schools. Therefore, in instructing reading comprehension, teachers should be aware of the intricacy of the reading process (see 2.3.6.1-2.3.6.2 as theoretical justification for reading comprehension strategy instruction): learning to read with comprehension is both a social and a cognitive process (Bandura, 1986).

### 3.2 READING STRATEGIES

Reading strategies can be described as the methods or procedures effective readers apply to better understand what they are reading. Allan & Miller (2005:15) describe strategies as a “conscious plan of action for achieving an activity or goal”. They also describe strategies as “... conscious, selective, useful for the situation and adaptive” (Allan & Miller, 2005:16). Both Aarnoutse & Schellings (2003: 387-409), believe that reading strategies can be “tailored” to the specific characteristics of the reader, the task and the text which will help the reader utilize mental processing skills necessary for holding information presented in text.

Skilled readers, once they have learned to utilize effective reading strategies, employ them regularly depending on the demands of the text. According to Irvin, Buehl, & Klemp (2003) skilled readers “determine their reading goal and activate prior knowledge before reading, apply effective decoding skills, monitor their comprehension and make connections between words and sentences during reading, and reflect upon the reading activity and summarize the message presented in the text after reading”. It is clear that skilled readers do not employ a single strategy, but a number of them simultaneously. On the other hand, less skilled readers, do not apply these reading strategies as effectively as skilled readers do, instead they see reading as a “hindrance” rather than a chance to learn something new and exciting (Irvin, et al., 2003). Reading comprehension strategies are “conscious and flexible plans that readers apply and adapt to a variety of texts and tasks” (Pearson, Roehler, Dole, & Duffy, 1992:169). They are processes readers engage in for the purpose of better understanding and remembering what they read.

Being strong supporters of reading instruction, Anderson & Guthrie (1999:302) claim that by teaching learners reading strategies, their understanding of the texts will improve. However, in order for these reading strategies to be effective, Liang & Dole (2006) suggest that teachers make use of “instructional frameworks”. An instructional framework serves as an initial set of ideas or principles teachers use to organise their instruction and can be used later on to develop more detailed instructional lessons. One such instructional framework developed by Palincsar & Brown (1984) is reciprocal teaching which contains four strategies: *predicting*, *asking questions*, *clarifying* and *summarizing* (Reciprocal teaching will be discussed in more detail later in 3.2.4.4).

Klapwijk (2011:78) points out that “reading strategies are concerned with reading comprehension”. Although research by Palincsar & Brown (1984) and Spörer, Brunstein & Kieschke (2009) have proven that reading strategy instruction improves comprehension, the reader still has to be taught “how to use reading strategies” in order to improve comprehension (Snow, 2002a:32). For Michael Pressley (2000) reading comprehension is impossible without decoding, vocabulary, world knowledge (to build world knowledge through reading and relate what they know to what they read (e.g., by asking “Why?” questions about factual knowledge in the text), active comprehension strategies (prediction, analysing, asking questions and summarizing), and monitoring. In his article, “Comprehension Instruction: What Works”, Pressley (2000) states that “[t]he case is very strong that teaching ... students to use a repertoire of comprehension strategies increases their comprehension of text”. He further urges the teachers to explain and model comprehension strategies, have the learners practice these strategies and motivate them to use such strategies when reading on their own.

### **3.2.1 Reading comprehension strategy instruction research**

Early research on comprehension strategy instruction (Pearson & Fielding, 1991; Pressley, Johnson, Symons, McGoldrick & Kurita, 1989) was based on the conviction that comprehension and long term memory of the text would be improved if readers constructed a particular type of representation (e.g., mental images) or related to texts in a particular way (e.g., relating to prior knowledge or explicitly seeking clarifications when unsure of meaning). Experimenters testing these strategies believed that the learners were not already engaging in such processing when reading. In order to measure the reading comprehension of the learners who received strategy instruction, some objective tests (e.g., multiple – choice items on the literal and implied messages in the text) were given. The performance of these strategy instructed learners was compared to the performance of learners not receiving strategy instruction (e.g., control subjects permitted to read as they normally did in preparation for the test) (Pressley & Wharton-McDonald, 1997:452).

By the early 1980s, researchers validated a variety of effective comprehension strategies that increased children’s understanding and memory of text, e.g., activating prior knowledge, identification of main ideas, construction of mental images, analysing stories into their story grammar components, question generation and summarization. They divided them in three phases:

- before: making predictions based on prior knowledge
- during: imagery generation
- after: summarization (Levin & Pressley, 1981).

With these validated comprehension strategies at hand the focus of research shifted towards finding “the most effective ways to teach students to use the strategies” (Pressley & Wharton-McDonald, 1997:453). There are different ways of teaching reading strategies and different approaches yield different results.

### **3.2.1.1 *Direct explanation approach***

According to Roehler & Duffy (1984) this comprehension strategy starts with explanation of the strategy and mental modelling by the teacher, in other words, showing the learners *how* to apply a strategy by thinking aloud (Duffy & Roehler 1989). In their description of direct explanation models, Harris & Pressley (1991: 403) state that learners are also being made aware of “purposes of strategies, how and why they work, and when and where they can be used”. Learners should extensively practice the strategies, while the teacher monitors the practice and “model, discuss, explain and re-explain” (Harris & Pressley, 1991: 403) as needed. Feedback and instruction are systematically reduced as the learners become increasingly independent in their strategy use. Following the conclusion by researchers that reading comprehension could be improved by direct explanation and modelling of strategies, followed by teacher assisted learner practice of the strategies, teachers attempted to adapt reciprocal and direct explanation of comprehension in their own settings.

### **3.2.1.2 *Educator-Devised Comprehension Strategies Instruction***

Educator-devised comprehension strategies instruction is also known as “transactional strategies instruction” (Pressley & Wharton-McDonald (1997:455). The term “transactional” emphasizes the transactions that are happening between learners, teachers, texts and other parts of the learning environment (Pressley, et al., 1992:535). Although transactional strategy is a combination of the reciprocal and direct explanation method, the strategy instruction is based much more on direct explanation and modelling by the teacher. During transactional strategy instruction a repertoire of comprehension strategies are taught which include: prediction based on prior knowledge activation, question generation, clarification, mental imagery, relating prior knowledge to text content and summarization.



Pressley & Wharton-McDonald (1997:458) are of the opinion that, “not only do transactional strategies instruction teachers extensively model and provide verbal, direct explanations, they also collaboratively discuss with students the thinking processes associated with strategy steps”. In contrast with reciprocal teaching, where the flexibility of discussion is significantly limited by a rigid pattern of instruction, there are no limits upon the order of which strategies are executed during transactional strategies instruction, nor teacher modelling of strategy, but rather the incorporation of flexible adaptation of strategic procedures. Although validations done by researchers (e.g., Brown, Pressley, Van Meter, & Schuder, 1996) have provided support for the conclusion that transactional strategies instruction can promote reading comprehension, Block & Duffy (2008:23) points out that improvement of comprehension is impossible without “explicit teacher explanation and rigorous scaffolding assistance”. As a language teacher I have observed the poor proficiency in some isiXhosa-speaking learners, especially in Grade 8, and therefore I agree with Block & Duffy that the participants in my study would also improve more with explicit instruction and rigorous scaffolding.

Over the years a substantial body of theory and research has reported on comprehension strategies and their usefulness in teaching reading. Two specific approaches to teaching reading comprehension strategies – “direct explanation” and “transactional instruction” (see 3.2.1.2 above) have been repeatedly validated and endorsed over the past two decades (e.g., Duffy, 2002; Duffy et al., 1987; Duke & Pearson, 2002; Graves et al., 2007; Pearson et al., 1992). Both Reutzel et al. (2003) and Pressley & El-Dinary (1997) claim that there is “solid evidence” that transactional instruction is effective, and such instruction has been shown to be particularly useful in giving students approaches that they use in their actual reading in and out of school.

### **3.2.2 Teachers and reading strategy instruction**

According to Fountas & Pinnell (2001), teaching reading must go beyond drills on isolated skills. Learners should rather be taught “strategies” of how to be engaged in text and to become aware of their thinking processes (Erickson, 2006). Deciding which reading strategies their learners need is a “daunting task for beginning teachers” (Robb, 2000:82). When teachers are not professionally prepared to deliver strategy instruction, they do “not understand the instruction or they are not committed to delivering the instruction” (Pressley, 2003:68). According to Block & Duffy (2008:28) teaching teachers to teach comprehension is more difficult than expected. It takes a lot of time and effort. However,

even with training, teaching comprehension is “very challenging” (Duffy, 2002; Pressley, 2002). Research conducted by both Graves & Liang (2003), show that for most teachers, appropriate materials to use in teaching comprehension strategies successfully is of the utmost importance.

Preparing teachers to use either direct explanation or transactional strategies instruction is a sizeable task and requiring expert trainers, according to Graves et al (2010:163). Unfortunately, research by Pressley (2002) has found clear evidence that relatively few teachers can and do learn to use transactional strategies instruction. The reason might be that transactional strategies instruction is an “on the fly” approach according to Graves et al (2010:163), because it is typically not supported by specific curriculum and instructional materials, and therefore teachers have found it “very difficult” to work transactional strategies instruction into the school day. Research done by Klapwijk in 2011 on teachers and reading strategy instruction concluded that RSI is not readily taken up by teachers and therefore it is clear that RSI requires a substantial mind shift from the teachers. Taking Klapwijk’s conclusion at heart, I realised that I would have to spend a great deal of time preparing materials and lesson plans if I wanted to develop reading strategies in my participants.

### **3.2.3 Research-based strategies for implementation**

As mentioned before, (3.1.2), teachers can look to research-based reading instruction strategies in order to improve their learners’ reading comprehension. However, the field on reading instruction strategies is vast and therefore has to be narrowed down for the purpose of this study. Consequently, the researcher has looked to the recommended strategies of the following researchers, Palincsar & Brown (1984), Pressley (1997) and Block & Parris (2008). The choice of the above mentioned researchers was prompted by two specific reasons in mind: (1) these researchers agree on a set of strategies, which are *activating prior knowledge, predicting, identify story structure, mental imagery, inference, monitoring, questioning and summarising*, and (2) the strategies they recommend serve the purpose of this research, namely, to improve reading comprehension. The above mentioned strategies address all the phases of the reading process as described in CAPS (2011:33). The following section will describe reading strategies activities and the value/benefit each activity has as an instructional approach.

### **3.2.4 Activities to implement reading strategies**

#### **3.2.4.1 *Listen-Read-Discuss (LRD)***

The Listen-Read-Discuss is a “starter” method for bridging from traditional instruction to a more interactive and scaffold approach. The greatest value of the L-R-D seems to be its ability to provide a simple, hands-on way to familiarize learners with the principles and practices of content area literacy. According to Manzo & Casale (1985), the Listen-Read-Discuss approach is a comprehension strategy that builds students' prior knowledge before they read a text.

This approach is done in three steps: (1) Firstly, the teacher reads the text while the learners listen. (2) Thereafter the learners read the text on their own and compare what they have learned when the teacher read, to their own understanding of the text. (3) Lastly, learners discuss their understanding of the text with other learners in their group. In this way they can reflect on the differences between their reading and that of the teacher. This activity can be done in a small or a bigger group.

The benefits of LRD lie in the fact that it is a powerful tool for engaging struggling readers, especially L2 learners (as in the case of my research subjects). Because the content of the text is covered orally at the beginning, the learners who are unable to read the text on their own, are able to gain at least a surface understanding about the reading. Another benefit of this approach is that students who lacked prior knowledge about the content gain it during the listening stage, which will allow them to more easily comprehend the text during the reading stage. A LRD is difficult to use on a daily basis due to the fact that developing readers' prior knowledge is time consuming, therefore Manzo & Casale (1985) suggest that teachers should be selective in choosing specific texts they feel their learners lack prior knowledge about and need more support with. There is also the danger that learners will become overly reliant on the teacher's initial reading of the text.

#### **3.2.4.2 *Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA)***

The Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA), an approach developed by Stauffer (1969) and endorsed by Readence, Moore & Rickelman (2000), could be used by teachers during all three phases of the reading process. Not only is this approach suitable for asking questions about a text, making predictions, reading to confirm or contradict predictions, the process also encourages learners to be active and thoughtful readers, enhancing their comprehension.

Instruction of a DRTA approach is carried out through the following steps:

**Step 1: Directing** – During the first step of the DRTA approach, scanning of the title, chapter headings, illustrations, and other explanatory materials are explored by the teacher and learners. This activity is done prior to reading the text. While busy making predictions of the reading passage, the teacher should make use of open-ended questions (e.g., "Given this title, what do you think the passage will be about?") to direct learners' thinking as they make predictions about the content or perspective of the text. The teacher should further encourage the learners to justify their responses and activate prior knowledge during this step.

**Step 2 Reading** – Before starting this step, the teacher should determine the text to be used and pre-selects points for learners to pause during the reading process. The reading should be broken into small sections to allow learners enough time to process information. The teacher should also make sure that the amount of reading to fit the purpose and the difficulty of the text. After the learners have read up to the first pre-selected stopping point in the passage, the teacher should prompt the learners with questions about specific information. At this point, learners should also evaluate their predictions and refine them if necessary. Continue this process until the learners have read each section of the reading passage.

**Step 3: Thinking** – After the learners have read the entire passage, the teacher should encourage the learners to reread the text and think about the predictions they have made. This is also an opportunity for the learners to verify or modify the accuracy of their predictions by finding supporting statements in the text. By asking questions such as (e.g., "What do you think about your predictions now?", "What did you find in the text to prove your predictions?"), the teacher deepens the thinking process. As the learners become more comfortable with this strategy, the teacher may include writing as part of the DRTA. Learners could write their predictions in a journal or on a piece of paper, discuss their predictions and share their thinking processes in a small group and lastly, write summary statements about how their predictions compared to the passage.

DRTA is a versatile approach and may be used with an individual, a small group, or a whole class. This activity can easily be adapted for a variety of subjects and reading levels. In determining the text, the teacher should be aware of the reading levels of each student, and be prepared to provide appropriate questions, prompts, and give examples of

how to make predictions during instruction. DRTA is effective in promoting inferential and evaluative responses to text. DRTA procedures are inclined to demand higher levels of thinking by the students by requiring “justification and verification” of predictions (Snow, 2002; Taylor et al., 2005). Both the learners and the teacher start the conversations (Palincsar et al., 2001) which occur immediately before or after reading a section of text (McKeown & Beck, 2003). The immediate interaction around the text help promote consistent engagement, clarify confusions, and provide a vehicle for creating an accurate representation of text as well as assimilation with prior knowledge (Smolkin & Donovan, 2001; Vosniadou et al., 2002). Even though this strategy is attractive because it has clear steps that a teacher can follow, it demands much from the teacher in terms of generating questions in steps 1 and 3.

### **3.2.4.3 *Monitoring/Clarifying***

The Monitoring/Clarifying strategy is an excellent activity that helps learners to be actively involved and monitor their comprehension as they read. Not only does this strategy teach learners to recognize when they don't understand parts of a text, it also focuses learners' attention on the fact that there may be reasons why the text is difficult to understand and therefore drives the learners to take the necessary steps to restore meaning. The Monitoring/Clarifying strategy as a component of the Reciprocal Teaching model defined by Palincsar & Brown (1984), offers teachers the opportunity to encourage learners to think about their own thought process during reading.

To implement this strategy, the teacher should pre-select appropriate reading texts based on the learners' reading level. Next, the teacher models the Monitoring/Clarifying process while providing learners with ample time and opportunities to practice. If the learners experience any difficulties while reading the text, they should be encouraged to use the following steps:

- Stop and think about what they have already read.
- Reread.
- Adjust their reading rate: slow down or speed up.
- Try to connect the text to something they have read in another book, what they know about the world, or to something they have experienced.
- Visualize.
- Reflect on what they have read.
- Use print conventions (key words, bold print, italicized words, and punctuation).
- Notice patterns in the text structure.

It is clear that this approach requires much preparation by the teacher and constant interaction with learners. However, it provides the opportunity to individualise teaching, based on each learner's level of meaning making as they engage with the text.

#### **3.2.4.4 Reciprocal Teaching**

Reciprocal Teaching focuses on helping learners acquire comprehension strategies. Teaching students the four strategies (predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing) empowers learners with tools that excellent readers use to meet their goals in reading a text. Poor readers become active and strategic readers become much like "excellent readers" (Glass & Zygouris-Coe, 2005:1).

According to Oczuks (2003), the phases of reciprocal teaching are:

- Using four strategies (predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing to improve comprehension;
- Teacher scaffolds instruction of the strategy by modelling, guiding, and applying the strategies;
- Guide learners to become metacognitive and reflective in their strategy use;
- Help learners to monitor their reading comprehension;
- Use the social nature of the learning to improve and scaffold reading comprehension; and
- Instruction is provided through a variety of classroom settings – whole-group or small groups.

The strategies are to be implemented as described below, in accordance with Oczuks (2003):

**Prediction:** The teacher models how to predict by looking and noting the title, author, and illustrations or graphics within the text. Ask learners to predict what they think the reading may be about. Get them to think about what is going to happen by asking questions (e.g., "What do you think will happen next?", "How might this process be used in other situations?"). By making predictions, readers are using the following processes: prior knowledge, thinking on a literal and inferential level, adding to their knowledge base, linking efferent and affective thinking processes, making connections, and filling the gaps in the author's writing (Block et. al., 2004). The thinking processes involved in predicting assist students in making meaning (Block, Rodgers, & Johnson, 2004).

**Question generations:** Remind learners to generate questions as they listen and read. Remind them of the three levels of questions- Right-There questions (answer in the text), Between-the-lines questions (inference needed), and Critical Thought questions (require their opinion). Question generating is a “flexible strategy” (Glass & Zygouris-Coe, 2005:3) to the extent that students can be taught and encouraged to generate questions at many levels.

**Clarifying:** Assists learners with comprehension difficulties by having them focus their attention on the text. As learners listen and read remind them to ask themselves what words and phrases are unclear to them. Explain to the learners that clarifying means to make clear what you did not understand by asking questions, for example “(How do you pronounce that?, What does the word mean, I think the author is saying...,What other words could we use in place of...?)” (Neufeld, 2006:308).

**Summarising:** Learners summarise the key elements of the story or text verbally, within pairs, and then share with their assigned small group or record their summary and read it aloud to their small group. Oral summaries are useful for comprehension checking “to recount the main points of what has been read” (Duke & Pearson, 2002).

By using Reciprocal Teaching, teachers instruct students by using four basic strategies instead of reading skills. Teaching students these strategies: predicting, questioning, clarifying and summarising - encourage them to read as good readers read by providing them with a bank of strategies they can draw upon. Learners practice the strategies (guided by the teacher) while reading actual text and this enables them to generalize the strategies into other content areas because they have been provided with meaningful and authentic purposes for use of the strategies. This strategy builds comprehension of both informational and narrative text through interactive dialogue between the teacher and the learner. In other words, reciprocal teaching is a way to teach students how to determine important ideas from a reading while discussing vocabulary, developing ideas and questions, and summarising information. Learners and teachers share the role of teacher by allowing both to lead the discussion about a given reading.



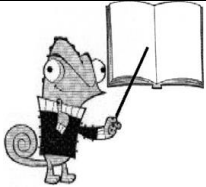



### 3.2.4.5 Question-Answer Relationship (QAR)

Question Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy developed by Taffy Raphael (2005), is an after reading strategy used to improve learners' reading comprehension. Sorrell (1996) believes that QAR is a useful tool in encouraging learners to actively read texts and comprehend the questions based on the source of information essential for the answer. Although learners of diverse backgrounds differ from mainstream learners in terms of their ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or primary language, this strategy helps teachers guide *all* learners to higher levels of literacy (Raphael & Au, 2005:206).

Current practices place increasingly heavy demands on teachers to ensure that all of their learners achieve high levels of literacy, as pointed out in Chapter 2 (section 2.4.1). The fact that teachers might be uncertain about how to teach reading comprehension strategies is further complicated by the fact that learners of diverse backgrounds often enter classrooms reading far below grade level. However, according to (Raphael & Au, 2005:208), QAR provides a framework that offers teachers a "straightforward approach" for reading comprehension instruction with the potential of eventually closing the literacy achievement gap. QAR is an effective strategy for all grade levels and subject areas, but according to Raphael (2005) it is crucial to consider the learners' age when selecting the type and amount of instruction.

Question-Answer relationship (QAR) is a strategy to be used *after* learners have read. QAR teaches learners how to decipher what types of questions they are being asked and where to find the answers to them. The four questions as outlined by Raphael in Sorrell (1996) include:



Right there questions	Think and search questions
 <p>The answer is in one place in the text. Words from the question and words that answer the question are often “right there” in the same sentence.</p>	 <p>The answer is in the text. Readers need to “think and search,” or put together different parts of the text, to find the answer. The answer can be within a paragraph, across paragraphs, or even across chapters and books.</p>
Author and you questions	On your own questions
 <p>The answer is not in the text. To answer the question, readers need to think about how the text and what they already know fit together.</p>	 <p>The answer is not in the text. Readers need to use their own ideas and experiences to answer the question.</p>

Adapted from Raphael and Au (2001, p. 4-5).

In order for learners to strategically implement this strategy, the teacher is required to model the method by thinking out loud. QAR can be taught by following the steps below (Raphael & Au, 2005):

“Before starting this approach make learners aware that QAR strategy consists of four types of questions. Sketch each type of question to the learners and give an example of each. It is entirely the teacher’s choice to teach each type of question individually or as a group. Next, prepare questions you want to ask after you have read a short passage to the learners. After reading the short passage, read the questions aloud to the learners. Model how you decide which type of question you have been asked to answer and show the learners how to find information to answer the question (i.e., in the text, from your own experiences, etc.). Ask the learners to read another passage on their own. Thereafter they have to team up with a partner to determine the type of question and how to find the answer”.

QARs require students to activate both literal and critical thinking skills. For students who have a hard time thinking beyond the text, this will be a challenging task and will require a lot of time to apply to their own readings and therefore, QAR should be practised over several lessons.

### 3.3 READING STRATEGY INSTRUCTION FRAMEWORK

The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement CAPS (2011:33) places reading under pre-reading, reading and post-reading phases. Strategy instruction activities to instruct the reading strategies in the different phases of the reading process have been described in 3.2.4.1-3.2.4.5. Because I have to teach within the CAPS framework, I chose from the various reading strategies those that correspond to the three phases described in the CAPS. Reading strategies, as shown in Table 5 below, have been listed as possibilities for implementation in the reading intervention.

Reading phase	Reading strategy	Strategy instruction Activity
<b>Pre- reading</b>	Activating prior knowledge	Listen-Read-Discuss (LRD)
	Predicting	Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA)
<b>Reading</b>	Monitoring	Monitoring/ Clarifying
<b>Post- reading</b>	Questioning	Reciprocal teaching
	Summarising	Question-Answer-Relationship(QAR)

Table 5: Reading phases, strategies & reading strategy instruction activities

The above reading strategy instructional framework is based on the suggestion of Liang & Dole (2006) (see 3.2.1) that teachers should make use of instructional frameworks for instructed reading strategies to be effective. For the purposes of my intervention, I realised that I would have to try out all of the reading strategy instruction activities in order to find the ones that work best for my learners, and then choose the most effective ones for the second cycle of my intervention.

### 3.4 CONCLUSION

Chapter 3 began with a view of reading instruction, followed by an overview of comprehension instruction. After a discussion of reading strategies, the focus shifted to reading comprehension strategy instruction research and the teacher as focus point in delivering reading instruction. Different research-based reading strategies were discussed followed by the strategies recommended to address the aim of this research intervention. The chapter concluded by describing the different instruction approaches to instruct the reading strategies in the different phases of the reading process. This concludes the literature review and therefore the attention in chapter 4 will be turned to the research design and implementation of the reading comprehension intervention.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN**

#### **4.1 RESEARCH DESIGN**

A research design can be defined as a tool encompassing all matters relating to the planning and implementing of a research project. The research design relating to this study includes Action Research as the research methodology, a mixed-method research approach (including quantitative and qualitative approaches) and various quantitative and qualitative instruments (e.g., observations, questionnaires, tests, etc.) for gathering data concerning the research question(s).

##### **4.1.1 Research questions and Aims**

In view of the research aims and objectives for this project, (see Chapter 1.4.1) the following research question was formulated:

How does a reading intervention programme contribute to the development of Grade 8 isiXhosa learners' reading comprehension in English?

To answer this question it is necessary to discuss not only learners' scores, but also their strategies, which implies a research methodology which allows for, as Creswell (2003:12) points out, "many approaches in collecting and analysing data, rather than subscribing to only one way". My aim was to stage an intervention for these learners with a particular language and socio-economic background, observe learners' strategies, improve their performance and reflect on the success or failure of the intervention to empower participants. The fact that Action Research addresses particular problems in a specific local and social setting with the purpose to socially uplift and empower the participants, made it the most suitable methodology for this study.

##### **4.1.2 ACTION RESEARCH**

Action Research (AR) was chosen as methodology for this study as it permits the chance to bring about "change in specific contexts" according to Parkin (2009). There are two critical purposes in conducting action research. These are: a practical outcome or action involving a real world phenomenon; and a contribution to knowledge (McNiff & Whitehead,

2006:12). Adding to this statement is Stringer & Genat (2004:3), who point out that, action researchers “engage in careful diligent enquiry not for the purpose of discovering new facts or revising accepted laws or theories, but to acquire information having practical application to the solution of specific problems related to their work.” An important aspect of AR making it relevant to the study at hand is that it is participative in nature, which means that both the researcher and the participants take part in the research. It “focuses on finding a solution to a local problem in a local setting” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:108). Teachers, therefore, should ask themselves: “What am I doing? What do I need to improve? How do I improve it?” (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006:7), and in doing so, they themselves learn while they are teaching. This aspect is discussed in the practical implementation of the AR cycles in chapter 5.

The AR cycles of planning, implementing, observing and reflecting provide the researchers with momentum to “implement the required changes” and to “reflect critically” on the process (Wallace, 1998:12). Being cyclical in nature, AR is a flexible methodology. In other words, AR is not set in stone, on the contrary, it allows educators the opportunity to “act on, observe, reflect on and re-plan” the change they have initiated in order to improve the identified problem in their practice (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000:595). Through these cycles, the educator hopes to “become aware of what is really happening” (Grabe & Stoller, 2002:157) in the classrooms at the school and relevant problem solving can be attempted as the project progresses.

Although action research has become one of the most advocated and used methodologies, Waters-Adams (2006:3) argues that “educational research through action research does not produce understanding that has universal truth...action research can produce generalisations about practice, but such generalisations are only part of a wider search for understanding”. In relation to my own study, the above statement means that the results I have achieved through action research cannot be generalised, but, according to Hamilton (1981), my “ideas and conclusions can be tried out by someone else in their own practice”.

#### **4.1.2.1 Defining AR**

What exactly is action research? As the name denotes, AR comprises of two components: action and research. These two components are explained by Dick (1999:1) as “dual aims of action (that is, change) and research (that is, understanding)”. According to him, action and understanding inform each other. Although there is no universally accepted definition

for action research, many useful ones do exist. In order to try and answer what action research is, it may be useful to explore some of the definitions and observations on action research as a methodology offered by various authors, as indicated below.

Koshy (2010:1) states that action research:

- is a method used for improving practice. It involves action, evaluation, and critical reflection and – based on the evidence gathered – changes in practice are then implemented;
- is participative and collaborative; it is undertaken by individuals with a common purpose;
- is situation-based and context specific;
- develops reflection based on interpretations made by the participants;
- is a process where knowledge is created through action; and
- can involve problem solving, if the solution to the problem leads to the improvement of practice; and findings will emerge as action develops, but these are not conclusive or absolute.

Another definition comes from Reason & Bradbury (2008:3) who describe action research as an approach which is used in designing studies which seek both to inform and influence practice. They also propose that action research consists of a “family of approaches” that have different orientations, yet reflect the characteristics which seek to “involve, empower and improve” aspects of participants’ social world.

Koshy (2010:9) further defines action research as “an approach employed by practitioners for improving practice as part of the process of change. The research is context-bound and participative. It is a continuous learning process in which the researcher learns and also shares the newly generated knowledge with those who may benefit from it”. By choosing action research as methodology for improving isiXhosa learners’ reading comprehension, my study embodied the definitions mentioned by Koshy (2010) and Reason & Bradbury (2008) in 4.1.2.1. The participative nature of action research allowed for collaborated participation by both the participants and me in order to bring about improvement in their comprehension of English texts. It gave me the opportunity to evaluate and critically reflect on the implemented reading strategies during the intervention

to empower the participants with knowledge needed to improve their use of reading strategies.

The graphic representation of AR demonstrated below is intended to illustrate the cyclic nature of AR and how the process proceeds sequentially.

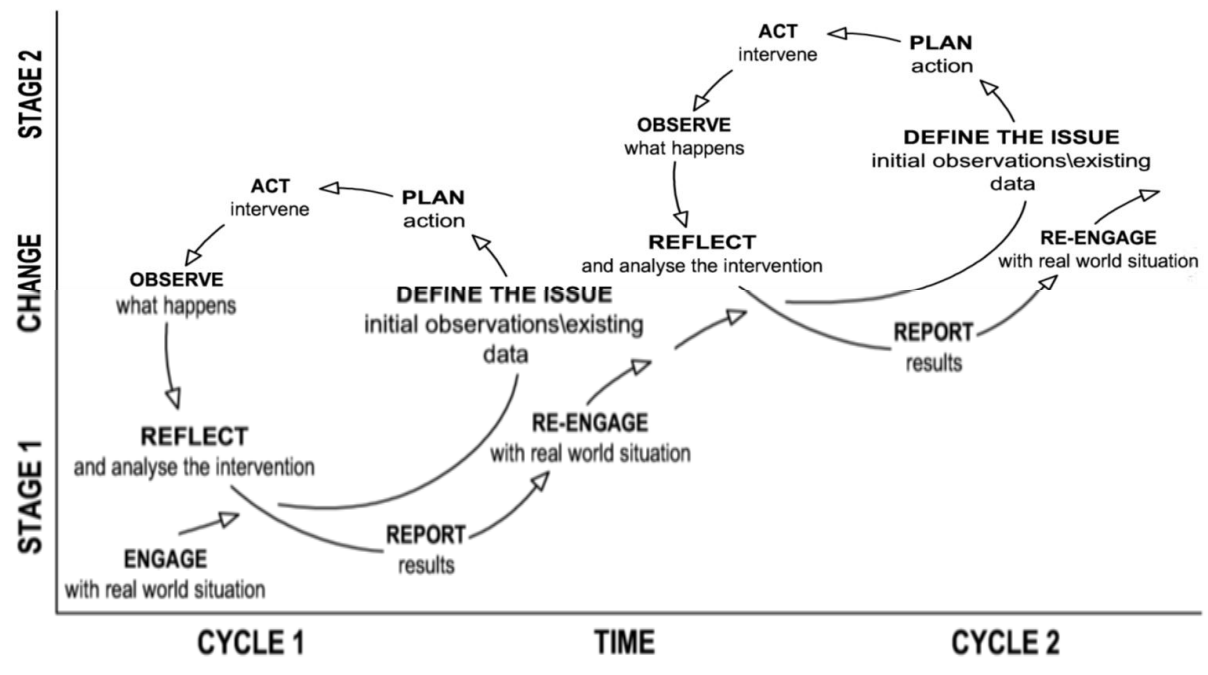


Figure 4: A Model of Action Research  
(Adapted from: RMIT University educational media website)

#### 4.1.2.2 Underpinning assumptions of AR

Four underpinning assumptions of AR are set out by McNiff & Whitehead (2006:23) and will be discussed in the order listed below:

4.1.2.2.1 Ontological assumptions (our view of ourselves in our relationships with others).

4.1.2.2.2 Epistemological assumptions (how we understand knowledge and how we acquire it).

4.1.2.2.3 Methodological assumptions (the way in which the research is carried out).

4.1.2.2.4 Social purposes of AR (the reasons for doing the research within its social contexts).

#### 4.1.2.2.1 Ontological assumptions

The term “ontology” according to Koshy et al (2010:14) is the “theory of being”. According to Crotty (1998:10) ontological assumptions are concerned with what constitutes “reality”, in other words “what is” and therefore researchers need to take a position regarding their perceptions of how things really are and how things really work. For this reason, Grix (2004:57) argues that the “researcher’s intentions, goals and philosophical assumptions are “inextricably linked” with the research they do and therefore researchers need to understand the philosophical underpinnings that inform their choice of research questions, methodology, methods and intentions” (Grix 2004:57). An action researcher is never alone, but rather sees herself/himself in relation with others. Not only does this relation refer to the evident physical community of people, but indeed the “mental world” where we evaluate our ideas in relation to those of others (McNiff & Whitehead (2006:25).

For McNiff & Whitehead (2006:27) ontological commitments that underpin action research involve action being “value laden and morally committed”. Therefore, it is inevitable that researchers would bring their philosophy of life, their moral perceptions, their values and ethical consciousness to the project. If by any chance the researcher treats her research as an experiment on other people, her ethical conduct would be questionable. Because action researchers “live and act between and across some very well-established social, philosophical, and educational separation lines” (Edge, 2001:1), the values they decide to live by, need to be “purposeful and morally committed” (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006:29). The commitment to research based on personal values within a social setting implies respect for the differences and similarities between individuals and the communities from which they originate. It is a fact that we live and learn in different cultures which have their own values system and for this reason McNiff & Whitehead (2006:23) make the researcher aware to “begin by articulating your values and asking whether you are being true to them”. In reply to McNiff & Whitehead’s suggestion that researchers should articulate their values, the researcher would like to specify the following as her moral guidelines: To

- be fair and impartial;
- consider other people’s interests;
- not interfere with another’s freedom;
- respect her fellow human beings; and
- work hard and honestly.



When considering that different views exist regarding what constitutes reality, another question must be how is that reality measured, and what constitutes knowledge of that reality. This leads us to questions of Epistemology.

#### **4.1.2.2.2 Epistemological assumptions**

Epistemology refers to the theory of knowledge and, in particular, “what is knowledge and what are the sources and limits of knowledge” (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Besides summarising epistemology as “knowing how you can know”, Hatch & Cunliffe (2006) ask how is knowledge created and how reality should be represented. According to Hatch & Cunliffe there is an inter-dependent relationship between ontology and epistemology. In other words, epistemology cannot be separated from ontology, as one informs and depends on the other.

As epistemology is concerned with creating knowledge, McNiff & Whitehead (2006:26) point out that during action research the researcher should be asking, “What am I doing? What do I need to improve? How do I improve it?” However, it should be kept in mind that AR is a participatory practice that involves humans who are “unique and unpredictable”, and make their own choices (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006:32), therefore the researcher should be aware not to impose her ideas on others. Hence, it becomes clear that to the action researcher, “knowledge is uncertain” McNiff & Whitehead (2006:27), because:

“There is no one answer. Knowledge is uncertain and ambiguous. A question may generate multiple answers.

Knowledge is created, not discovered. This is usually a process of trial and error. Provisional answers and the process itself are always open to critique.

Any answer is tentative, and open to modification. Answers are often incommensurable and cannot be resolved. People just have to live with the dissonance and do the best they can” (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006:32).

The description of the nature of knowledge above agrees with my own views of knowledge whereby “answers are created through negotiation with other knowing individuals” (McNiff & Whitehead 2006:33). The AR cycles is the most appropriate vehicle for this view of knowledge because it provided me with the opportunity to interact, reflect, revise and interact again, rather than to assume that an answer would be obvious after a single intervention session. After the discussion of both the ontological and epistemological assumptions, it is appropriate to turn our attention to the methodological assumption of AR.



#### 4.1.2.2.3 Methodological assumption

Methodologies refer to the way the research is carried out. One of the main methodological assumptions of AR is that the methodology is “open-ended and developmental”. The fact that there are no fixed answers and learning seen as never complete, inspire action researchers to try multiple innovative ways, or as Marion Dadds & Susan Hart (2001) call it: “methodological inventiveness” to find the best methodology.

Although Henning (2005:36) points out that the “...decision-making actions ... are dependent on the knowledge and the philosophy of the *researcher*”, McNiff & Whitehead (2006:25) on the other hand urge action researchers “to incorporate the insights of *others*” in creating new methodologies. This underlines the fact that action research is participatory and collaborative, in the sense that it takes place in a social context and involves other people. It is therefore through the collaboration with learners that I, as action researcher used the opportunity to investigate my own practice in order to improve it.

The AR researcher is a practitioner who sees himself/ herself as an agent. Sen (1999:19) describes an agent as “someone who acts and brings about change, and whose achievements can be judged in terms of his/her own values and objectives”. (In this instance, the researcher is an agent who strives to bring about change in her educational practice by implementing a reading intervention). The main responsibility of an agent is to “ask questions” and “not accept final answers” (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006:34). According to these authors, concerns should be followed through a “developmental process” which shows cycles of planning, implementing, observing and reflecting in order to improve a situation (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006:36). Finally the attention turns to the social purposes of action research and therefore the following discussion below, appropriately places AR where it belongs: in society.

#### 4.1.2.2.4 Social purposes of AR

As pointed out by Henning (2005:47), the social purpose of AR is to “emancipate the participants”. Driven by a sense of social action, schools, families and communities at large could be empowered to “improve their personal and social situations” (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006:12) by considering what they are doing and taking responsibility for their actions.

Vollman et al (2004) go further and state that the purpose of AR is “to foster capacity, community development, empowerment, access, social justice, and participation”. In other words, through participative action research communities could be empowered “to live fulfilled lives according to their own freely embraced values” (Edge, 2001:4). Just as empowerment through collaborative participation is one of the social purposes of AR, empowerment of the learners is one of the crucial functions of a school.

## **4.2 RESEARCH METHOD**

By considering Creswell’s (2003:12) suggestion of employing “many approaches in collecting data, rather than subscribing to only one way”, the most applicable approach in addressing the research aims and objectives of this study was a mixed-method approach including both quantitative and qualitative methods.

### **4.2.1 Mixed-method approach: qualitative and quantitative data**

Mixed-method research had been given different names by various researchers in the past. Tashakkori & Teddlie (2003: 212) and Creswell & Plano Clark (2007: 5–6) note that such terms as “multi-method”, “integrated”, “blended” and “combined” have been used, along with “multi-methodological research” and “mixed model research”. Punch (2009: 287) refers to mixed method research as “empirical research” that involves the collection and analysis of “both qualitative and quantitative data”.

For Johnson & Onwuegbuzie (2004:18) the fundamental principle of mixed method research is that we can learn more about our research topic if we can combine the strengths of qualitative research with the strengths of quantitative research while compensating at the same time for the weaknesses of each method. According to Tashakkori & Teddlie (2003:677–80) the main paradigm associated with the mixed-method approach is the pragmatic paradigm which focuses on “what works” in getting research questions answered. Punch (2009:19) also mentions if taking the pragmatic approach is to “begin with the research questions that need answers and then choose methods for answering them”.

For the purpose of this research, a mixed-method approach was used which incorporated the collecting of both quantitative and qualitative data sequentially. Creswell, Plano Clark et al (2003) state, “the mixed methods sequential design consists of two distinct phases: quantitative followed by qualitative”. In other words, a researcher first collects and analyses the quantitative (numeric) data. The qualitative (text) data are collected and

analysed second in the sequence and help explain, or elaborate on, the quantitative results obtained in the first phase. Creswell (2003:211-212) further recommends that researchers should keep the following in mind, when using a mixed-method approach for collecting data: implementation (sequence of data collection), priority (which approach will be given priority) and integration (how the data types will be mixed).

As already mentioned, in this study the collection of quantitative and qualitative data was done sequentially: firstly, quantitative data was collected which included the baseline test data, the research participants' reading age data, data from participants' questionnaires and measurement data from the reading strategy test (see 4.4.1.1-4.4.1.3). These quantitative data sets were collected *before* the implementation of the intervention took place. Qualitative data were collected over a period of three months through observations (while the intervention was implemented in the form of action research cycles), reflective journals of the participants and the learners' work. At the end of the three months, the reading strategy transfer test (see 4.4.1.4) was done to collect the final quantitative data. Data from March and June English test and examination scores of the participants were also gathered and compared at the end of the intervention.

### **4.3 RESEARCH SITE AND PARTICIPANTS**

The research participants chosen to participate in this study were Grade 8 isiXhosa learners. These learners were selected without any inconvenience to the educators' schedule or disturbing the daily functioning of the school, since the research observations were done after school.

#### **4.3.1 School**

Sharky High School<sup>2</sup> was the chosen school for the research. It was chosen for the following reasons: (1) the researcher is an English FAL educator at the school, and (2) being a multicultural school, learners (especially the isiXhosa learners) are taught in a language that differs from their home language. The latter reason was significant for this study because the research was an investigation into the understanding of English text by isiXhosa learners. Learners attending Sharky High School live in poor socio-economic communities. The school is situated in the poverty-stricken "coloured" township where most of the parents or guardians have low-income jobs or are unemployed. Most of the

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<sup>2</sup> Pseudonym used to protect the real name of the research school

parents and/or guardians of the learners are illiterate or semi-literate and their involvement in the education of their children is very low.

School attendance at the research school is admirable, but it is often influenced by external circumstances. The instability of the buses and taxi's transporting learners from neighbouring towns to school each day often plays a big role in the attendance of the learners. On rainy days attendance drops due to the fact that the majority of the learners have to walk quite a distance to school. Another factor influencing attendance is the notion under the learners to stop attending school as soon as they have completed their exams at the end of each term, even though there are still days left until the official closing of the school.

The school is relatively new (only three years old), and it is generally under-resourced. Being a non-school-fee institution, it struggles to satisfy all the needs of the learners and it is dependent on monetary donations from the local business fraternity. A library is up and running at the school but it is fairly small and not adequately stocked. Although the learners are motivated by the teachers to make use of the library during break times and after school, not many learners adhere to the call. The Khanya Project, sponsored by the Western Cape Education Department, furnished a classroom with computers where classes have the opportunity to spend a period per week, reading or doing mathematics.

In terms of the management of the school there is a definite hierarchy, with the principal, deputy-principal and head of departments (HODs) making up the senior management team (SMT). The current demographics of the school reflect 283 black, 304 coloured and 96 white learners. The teaching staff consists of 8 coloured, 2 black and 14 white educators. The learners as well as the teaching staff reflect the multi-racial profile of the school. Although approximately 50% of the learners are isiXhosa-speaking the teachers in the school are Afrikaans speaking and the language of teaching (LoT) is Afrikaans and English.

#### **4.3.2 Learners**

Seven (7) Grade 8 isiXhosa learners took part in the reading strategy intervention. The learners were invited and agreed to participate in the research after data gathered from the comprehension baseline test revealed that they were in need of an intervention to improve their understanding of English text. Although I am not the participants' English teacher, from my experience as an English First Additional Language teacher at the research school, I have noticed that isiXhosa learners find it difficult to comprehend

English texts. For this reason I specifically focused on isiXhosa subjects for this study because they are the learners who have to study in a language that is different to their own language. All the research activities and observations concerning my study were done on Wednesdays and Thursdays after school to prevent any inconveniences to the other educators.

#### **4.4 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS TO GATHER DATA**

With mixed-method research in mind, both quantitative and qualitative instruments were used.

##### **4.4.1 Quantitative instruments**

In order to gather the quantitative data for this research, I administered four tests:

A baseline comprehension test to obtain data and identified the research participants (see Addendum A);

A word reading test to determine the reading age of the participants (see Addendum B);

A reading strategy test to obtain data on the reading strategy knowledge (if any) of the participants (see Addendum D); and

A reading strategy transfer test after the intervention took place to measure their knowledge of strategy transfer (see Addendum E).

Besides the conducted tests, a questionnaire was used to obtain background knowledge of the participants. March examination results in English (before the intervention) and June examination results were also used for comparison after the intervention.

##### **4.4.1.1 Baseline Test**

The baseline Test (Addendum A) was administered to the whole Grade 8E2 class with the purpose of selecting the research participants. Prior to administering the test, permission had been asked from Grade 8E2's class teacher to use his register class for the test.

##### **4.4.1.1.1 The preparation for the test.**

- Reading the text
- Explaining difficult vocabulary.
- Discussing the different animals in the text by asking probing questions.

#### 4.4.1.1.2 The Baseline Test.

Section	Instruction	Purpose	Reference to test
Section A	Answer the questions	Inferential- cause and effect relationship	Questions 1-7
Section B	Fill in the missing words	Cloze-Draw on relation between text and phrases	Questions 8-12
Section C	Draw a circle around the word to which the underlined word refers to	Anaphoric –pointing to something that was referred to.	Questions 13-15
Section D	Give the meaning of the following words	word meaning	Questions 16-17

Table 6: Baseline Test

Before the learners attempted to answer Section A, we went through each question and I explained what is expected from them. They were given ample time to complete the questions in this section. Thereafter we moved to Section B. In Section C, I focused their attention on the underlined words and asked them to circle the word they thought referred to the underlined words. The purpose of Section D was to establish whether the learners knew the meaning of the words. After I got the results of the baseline test, seven participants, who obtained some of the lowest scores on the test, were identified and asked to participate in the research. The results of this test will be discussed in chapter 5 (see 5.3.1.1.1).

#### 4.4.1.2 Burt Word Reading Test

The next step was to determine the reading level of each participant. The Burt Word Reading Test (see Addendum B) was used to determine each participant's reading age and also to compare their reading age to their real age. I administered the Burt Word Reading test to attain the participants' current word reading capability based on a reliable and standardized tool. The Burt Word Reading Test is a tool that researchers and teachers could use as a determiner of a learner's reading ability, and therefore I chose this test to assist me in choosing age appropriate reading material to implement during the intervention. The test was administered over a period of two consecutive Wednesdays after school. The word scores obtained by the participants on the test were checked by an independent colleague (see test results 5.3.1.1.2).

The Burt Word Reading Test consists of a list of 110 words, arranged in groups of ten, and presented in increasing order of difficulty. The test is suitable for use on learners between

the ages of six to thirteen years. The test is administered to learners individually in a quiet setting, free from distractions. The learner is required to read the words on the card aloud without the administrator's help, starting at the top of the page and read the words from left to right. You should take the child's first response as their answer, but if they immediately correct a mistake, without being prompted to do so, you can allow that as a correct response. The test is continued until the learner has made ten reading mistakes in succession, there-after the test administrator will stop the test and add the number of words the learners had read correctly to get a total out of 110. The learners' raw score is converted to their equivalent reading age by using the Burt Word Test Table (see Addendum C).

#### **4.4.1.3 Reading Strategy Test**

I administered a reading strategy test (see Addendum D) to the research group before attempting the research intervention with the same participants. The intention was to obtain data concerning their strategy knowledge transfer which I could compare after administering the research intervention. The Reading Strategy Test (RST) included questions regarding the reading strategies enclosed in the research intervention. These questions were compiled to test the participants' knowledge of reading strategies before they had been exposed to the reading intervention (see 5.3.1.1.4 for the results of the test). It was necessary to find out whether learners had been exposed to such strategies by primary school teachers, since these strategies have been introduced in the curriculum through the National Reading Strategy.

Furthermore, data collected from the RST could be used for direct comparison to the data collected from the Reading Strategy Transfer Test (RSTT) to assess the participants' strategy knowledge transfer.

#### **4.4.1.4 Reading Strategy Transfer Test**

I administered a Reading Strategy Transfer Test (RSTT) (see Addendum E) after completing the research intervention. The data captured from the test was for direct comparison between the participants' strategy knowledge before (RST) and, after the research intervention had been implemented. This was done to assess to which extent transfer of reading strategy knowledge (Supplying a Title, Word meaning, Answering

questions, Generating questions and Summarising) had taken place (if any) (see 5.9.1 for the results).

Measurements taken in the RSTT included providing a title, give the meaning of the words, answering questions (right there, think and search, on your own), generating questions and summarising. The rubric I used for each of the measurements was adapted from the one used by Klapwijk (2011:108) in her doctoral dissertation. The five measurements were scored as follows:

Measurement	Score	Explanation for score	Strategy Assessed
Title	0 1 2	No title Title not completely relevant to text Title relevant to title	<b>Prediction</b> (Reciprocal Teaching)
Word Meaning	0 1 2	Incorrect word Correct word but misspelled Correct word with no spelling mistakes	<b>Monitoring reading</b> (Reciprocal Teaching)
Answering questions Right There questions	0 1 2	No answer/ Incorrect answer Answer present but misspelled Correct answer	<b>Questioning</b> (Question-Answer-Relationship)
Think and search questions	0 1 2 3	No answer/ Incorrect answer Answer only Answered in a sentence but made spelling mistake/s Answered in full sentence with no spelling mistake/s	<b>Questioning</b> (Question-Answer-Relationship)
Generating questions	0 1 2 3	No answer/ No response Questions present but not completely related to text Questions relevant and text based only Questions relevant and knowledge based only	<b>Questioning</b> (Question-Answer-Relationship)
Summarisation	0 1 2 3	No answer/ No response Summary present but not completely relevant to text Summary partially relevant to text. Summary completely relevant to text, written in own words	<b>Summarising</b> (Reciprocal Teaching)

Table 7: Rubric for Reading Strategy Transfer Test Rubric adapted from Klapwijk (2011: 108)

The RST test papers were marked and scored by me, where after an independent colleague from the school scored the same test papers. He scored the test papers independently and there were no differences between our scores.

#### 4.4.1.5 Questionnaires

At the beginning of the research study, a questionnaire (see Addendum F) was handed out to each research participant to gain more data on their background. Questions ranged from general questions to questions pertaining to the research school and their homes. According to Leedy & Ormrod (2005:185) questionnaires have an advantage over



interviews since they could be completed “anonymously”, and questions of a sensitive nature could be answered with more openness than answering the same question in an interview. However, in some instances questionnaires could be too structured, with the result that important aspects of a subject that otherwise might have come to light in an interview, could be left out. Responses of my research participants to the questionnaires will be discussed in chapter 5.

#### **4.4.1.6 March and June Test results**

Johnson & Christensen (2004:192) define secondary data as existing data or readily available data. This type of data is usually collected or recorded at an earlier time, usually by a different person from the current researcher and often for an entirely different purpose. In my research I made use of official documents (March and June school reports). The purpose was to corroborate whether there was any difference in English subject and content subject results after the intervention, not suggesting that any changes are due solely to the intervention. I drew a comparison between the March results (prior intervention) and the June results (after intervention) to see if there were any significant differences in the two sets of English results. These results will be analysed and discussed in chapter 5 (5.9.3).

#### **4.4.2 Qualitative instruments**

To gather qualitative data I made use of three instruments, namely observations during the implementation of the two cycles of the intervention, reflective journals (see copies of their journal entries Addendum G) of the participants and lastly, samples of their work (Addendum H).

##### **4.4.2.1 Observations**

As a participant in the research project, the action researcher intentionally makes use of observations to “gather information” (Murray-Thomas, 2003:60) concerning the progress of the participants during the implementation of the intervention and to seek solutions if needed. According to these authors, observation can also be defined as watching and/ or listening to what is happening, then recording any manifestations. Leedy & Ormrod (2005:145) agree with Murray-Thomas, but go further in saying that observations should be intentionally unstructured and “free-flowing”.

Direct observations have advantages in the sense that the researcher can observe instantaneously what is happening and questions guiding the observations could range from the very general to very specific. During the observations the researcher should be aware what to look for and why. Leedy & Ormrod (2005:146) warn that the researcher should not confuse his/her actual observations with his/her interpretations of them for two reasons; firstly, these initial interpretations most probably will change during the course of the study and secondly, in keeping record of what had been observed, the researcher should be as objective as possible.

I observed my participants for three months gathering data for this research. What I observed at every stage in the intervention will be fully discussed in chapter 5 when I discuss the cycles of Action Research.

#### **4.4.2.2 Reflective Journal**

Spalding & Wilson (2002:1396) stress that journals serve as a “permanent record of thoughts and experiences”. For Williams & Wessel (2004) the purpose of reflective journals is to “deepen students’ understanding of experiences” and to foster “thinking skills” that actively engage them in learning.

Keeping a journal in action research has enormous benefits for the researcher. Not only is journaling a tool that enables the researcher to document valuable information regarding the intervention; it also adds immense value as a reflecting tool, aiding the researcher in her/his reflection on the effectiveness and progress of the project at hand. A journal enables the researcher to reflect on what is happening in the project by re-reading personal thoughts, observations, daily experiences and in doing so the act of reflection becomes a thinking tool whereby “knowledge is created by the transformation of experience through observation and reflection” (Phelps, 2005:38).

After each contact session, the research participants were asked to reflect on the activities we did that day. These reflections were written in their journals. I have made copies of some of my participants’ reflections from their journals (see Addendum G). I believe that by keeping a journal the research participants had an opportunity to document their experiences, their fears and their triumph throughout the research project.

#### **4.4.2.3 Learners’ work**

I took samples of the participants’ work (see Addendum H) during the implementation of the reading strategy intervention to define whether progress (if any) was being made in their summary writing and questioning.

## 4.5 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

This research study employed the mixed-method methodology. To analyse both quantitative and qualitative data needed different methods of analysis.

### 4.5.1 Analysis of quantitative data

I have used 6 (six) quantitative instruments (see 4.4.1) in this research study to gather data: The Baseline Test, Burt Word Reading Test, Reading Strategy Test, Reading Strategy Transfer Test, Questionnaires (for background knowledge only) The March and June examination results of the participants.

The following instruments were used to obtain data *before the reading intervention* started:

The baseline comprehension test (to identify research participants)

The Burt Word Reading test (to test their word recognition ability/ reading age)

The Reading Strategy test (to test their understanding (if any) of the reading comprehension strategies)

Questionnaires (to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' backgrounds)

March examination results of participants (for data on their performance in English before the intervention)

The following instruments were used to obtain data *after the reading intervention* had been implemented:

The Reading Strategy Transfer test was implemented after the different strategies were taught during the intervention. Five measurements (title, word meaning, formulating questions, answering questions and summarisation) were measured in the test. The purpose was to measure the transfer of strategy knowledge that took place (if any) also for comparison between the data of the Reading Strategy test before the intervention and the data of the Reading Strategy Transfer test after the intervention.

The June English examination results of participants were obtained from the school. These scores (in percentages) were compared to the scores in their March examination before the intervention to observe if any improvement in their English results had taken place.

#### **4.5.2 Analysis of qualitative data**

Methods to analyse qualitative data have been developed by various researchers. Researchers, Fraenkel & Wallen (2008:476) are of the opinion that, in processing qualitative data the researcher has to take “a holistic view” of all gathered data before segmenting and reassembling them into categories. On the other hand, McMillan & Schumacher (2001:462) define qualitative data analysis as “a relatively systematic process of selecting, categorising, comparing, synthesising and interpreting to provide explanations of the single phenomenon of interest”. Creswell (2003: 191-195) suggests that, in analysing qualitative data, the researcher should organize and prepare the data by transcribing interviews, typing up field notes and sorting the data into different types. Another suggestion comes from Rossman & Rallis (1998:171) to organize the material into “chunks” to generate “themes” for analysis. Boyatzis (1998: vi) agrees with Rossman & Rallis that thematic analysis is a process for encoding qualitative data and, argues that a good theme is able to capture the qualitative richness of a phenomenon.

For analysis and interpretation of the qualitative data in this research study interpretational data analysis will be used. In this process, all the data from the observations, field notes, entries in a research journal, and samples of learners’ work will be closely examined to find constructs, themes and patterns. Abovementioned suggestions from Fraenkel & Wallen (2008:476), Creswell (2003: 191-195) and Rossman & Rallis (1998: 171) were employed in analysing the data. During each step in the intervention cycle I collected qualitative data and interpreted the data in order to construct the greater picture in terms of qualitative research.

#### **4.6 MEASURES TO ENSURE TRUSTWORTHINESS**

Creswell & Miller (2000) state that validity is seen as the strength of qualitative research and terms that speak to this idea include ‘trustworthiness’, ‘transferability’ and ‘credibility’. In my study I made use of quantitative and qualitative data collection methods to substantiate the findings and in doing so ensured validity of my research. I sought the advice and opinion of my colleagues to determine whether or not they agree with my interpretation of the data and conclusions drawn from it (also see McNiff & Whitehead, 2006:157-161). Observations, discussions and interviews with the participants during the study acted as member checks. The constructions that developed as a result of data collected and analysed, were verified with my research participants to check whether they

agreed with the conclusions. In the context of my study, agreeability has to be seen in the perspective of power relations; the participants would have the tendency to agree with me since I was perceived as a teacher figure. I believe that using member checks aided me to ensure this, as I had to confirm my interpretations with the participants. Data gathered were examined in order to construct the greater picture by means of interpreting the observed information (the “thin” description) in terms of qualitative research (the “thick” description) (Henning, 2004:6).

In order to ensure the credibility of my research I worked closely with my supervisor who, as my peer, posed searching questions to help me confront my own values and to guide the next steps in my study. I monitored my own growth throughout the study and documented the process of change I have experienced. Transferability was ensured by giving a thick description (the contextualization of the school, see 4.3.1). Reliability in AR means that the researcher feels confident that her findings and claims are valid. Therefore, the reliability of my study refers to the constancy of my research and the findings.

#### **4.6.1 Triangulation of Data**

Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2000:112) define triangulation as “the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour”. According to Henning (2004:103), triangulation itself is insufficient without the importance of different approaches to “working the data”. In this study both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to collect data. Altrichter et al (2008) contend that triangulation “gives a more detailed and balanced picture of the situation”. Data triangulation implies the collection of accounts from different participants in a prescribed setting, from different stages in the activities of the setting and, if appropriate, from different sites of the setting (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor & Tindall, 1994: 146). During triangulation several sources of data are collected in order to seek common themes in order to direct the research question (Leedy & Ormrod 2005:99).

It also entails the cross-checking of the consistency of specific and factual data items from various sources via multiple methods at different times (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). In this study, data triangulation entailed cross-checking and comparison of qualitative data received from observations of reading strategies instruction during the intervention, with quantitative data gathered from the reading test, baseline test, reading strategy test, reading strategy transfer test as well as the data from March and June English results.

The qualitative data acted as a triangulation procedure for the quantitative data and the various quantitative data sets acted as checks on each other and on the qualitative data. Extensive examining and reflecting on data happened continuously during the study and member checking was done by the participants to verify whether the qualitative findings were valid. Triangulation of data was also facilitated by consulting my supervisor for peer debriefing to improve the accuracy of my description.

Patton (1990) states that “using a dual approach to triangulation does not result in a single, clear-cut, consistent picture, but it provides a challenge to improve comprehension”. Triangulation also stimulates the creation of inventive methods, and new ways of capturing a problem (De Vos, 1998). In my study this was illustrated by the development and implementing of reading strategies to improve the comprehension of isiXhosa learners’ reading comprehension of English text.

#### **4.6.2 Using standardized tests**

Standardized tests are fair and objective measures of student achievement according to Phelps (2005). The term “standardised” or “standardisation” refers to uniformity across settings in reference to both administration and scoring of the test (Cizek, 2007). Therefore, a test is also defined as “a standardized procedure for sampling behaviour and describing it with categories or scores” (Cizek, 2007:2). The South African Department of Education does not have standardized tests to test reading and comprehension and this is a problem in assessing the reading and comprehension levels of learners. One of the standard educational tests that is being used in South Africa for reading and comprehension (The Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test (SDRT) has been developed internationally according to Foxcroft et al (2004). However, both national and international tests, currently used by South African assessment practitioners, need to be “urgently adapted, revised or updated” and evaluated for their South African validity, reliability and cross-cultural bias (Foxcroft et al., 2004:7). Finding ways to assess every individual fairly is not a simple or easy task, therefore it is the responsibility of educationist to seek ways in which assessment can be meaningful and true for every individual.

Foxcroft & Roodt (2001:6), specifically state that:

“A test is usually designed in a certain context (society, culture) for a specific purpose, and the normative information used to interpret test performance is limited to the characteristics of the normative sample. Consequently, the appropriateness of an assessment measure for an individual, group, or organisation from another context, culture, or society cannot be

assumed without an investigation into possible test bias and without strong consideration being given to adapting and re-norming the measure”.

As an educator, I have experience of drawing up personal tests in English Additional Language. It was upon this experience that I drew when I composed the baseline comprehension test. Although the baseline test I formulated could be applied across cultures (i.e. all the cultures at Sharky High), for the purpose of this study it was formulated to gather the required data on the Grade 8 isiXhosa learners’ understanding of English comprehension texts only. The following questions were included because they have been shown to be the most crucial types of question for comprehension (Pretorius, 2005: 141-142):

- Answer the questions (Inferential- cause and effect relationship);
- Fill in the missing words (Cloze-Draw on relation between text and phrases);
- Draw a circle around the word to which the underlined word refers to (Anaphoric –pointing to something that was referred to); and
- Give the meaning of the following words (Word meaning) I explicitly wanted to test the learners’ comprehension skills (see Table 5: 4.4.1.1.1 and Addendum A for a copy of the test).

Even though the Burt Word Reading Test (1974), which is a standardised tool, only measures learners’ word recognition, I wanted to use it alongside my personal (Baseline) test to determine if there was any correlation between the Burt word reading results and the Baseline results to ensure that I obtain a reliable score.

#### **4.7 ETHICAL CLEARANCE**

O’ Leary (2004: 50) states: “Researchers are unconditionally responsible for the integrity of the research process. Ethics is foundational to all research; with power comes responsibility”. Therefore, the fact that qualitative researchers are guests in the private spaces of the world, their manners should be good and their code of ethics strict” according to Merriam (2001:214).

To ensure that ethical practices were followed in this research, I did the following:

- Permission for performing my research study at the research school was obtained from the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) (see Addendum I).



- Ethical clearance for the research project was obtained from the Stellenbosch Research Ethics Committee (see Addendum J).
- Permission to perform my research study at Sharky High School (research school) was obtained from the principal. I described the nature of my study to him and highlighted the purpose of it. He readily admitted that my study would benefit learners and teachers given the current literacy situation at the school.
- Seeing that the participants were minors, written consent (Informed Consent Form, Addendum K) had to be obtained from the parents to allow their children to participate in the intervention.
- A signed Participant Informational Leaflet and Assent Form (see Addendum L) was obtained from the research participants that explained the research purpose and methods of the study. It also gave them information about their rights as a participant in the study and contact information if they wished to speak to somebody about their participation/ and or refusal to take part in the study.

Both the Parent Consent Form (see Addendum K2) and the Participant Assent Form (see Addendum L2) were translated to isiXhosa to give the parents and participants a better understanding of the research project they are consenting to. The content of these forms were explained to the parents in English by me and in isiXhosa with the help of an isiXhosa teacher who translated the content to the parents.

#### **4.8 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has provided the reader with a description of the research design, mixed-method research approach and methodology of this study. Various quantitative and qualitative instruments that were used to generate both quantitative and qualitative data were discussed, followed by the chosen methodology, namely Action Research, and the underpinning assumptions of action research. The chapter concluded with the data analysis of both the quantitative and qualitative data, measures to ensure trustworthiness of the research, followed by the ethical measures required for this research study. To end this chapter I want to focus the reader's attention to part of a quote from Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit (2004:101) that states: "The true test of a competent researcher comes in the analysis of the data" and for that reason we move on to chapter 5 where the analysed results of the gathered data in this study will be discussed.



## CHAPTER 5

### RESEARCH ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the results and findings of the interpreted data (quantitative and qualitative) gathered during the research study will be discussed. The reporting of data will be presented as follows: Firstly, quantitative data collected *before* the intervention will be analysed and discussed. Secondly, the implementation of the reading strategies during the cycles of the intervention will be discussed, followed by the interpretation and analysis of qualitative data collected *during* both cycles of the research intervention and lastly, an analysis and interpretation of quantitative data collected *after* the intervention will be done. Observation of the participants during the implementation of every stage in the intervention is included in this chapter. Factors that have influenced the implementation of the intervention will also be highlighted and lastly, the chapter will conclude with a summary of how the research question and the aims were addressed by this study.

#### 5.2 IDENTIFICATION OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

According to Leedy & Ormrod (2005:47) “the heart of the research project” is the research problem. “Many learners struggle to read”. This statement was the reality that drove my research project. Labov (2007:18) states that “the failure of schools in low-income neighbourhoods to teach children to read is a serious social problem”. Not only is Sharky High School situated in a very poor community, its language of teaching and learning is English and Afrikaans, languages isiXhosa learners cannot comprehend, especially having to read texts in English.

##### 5.2.1 Defining the limitations

The fact that the research is done at a school is a challenge in itself. A school environment is always subjected to unforeseen conditions as we deal with “real life” situations. According to Burns (1999:46) it would be careless to attempt action research without taking the limitations that might occur in consideration. As an educator at Sharky High I knew I had to plan carefully as unexpected interruptions could easily affect my research. Two problems I encountered throughout the research was (1) the attendance of my

research subjects, especially if it rained on the day of our class, and (2) the unexpected staff or subject meetings that usually took place after school compelling me to reschedule the class. Although subject advisors' visits, class visits by the SMT, or changes of timetable didn't affect my research during school hours (since it was done after school), examination time proved challenging, since the learners stop attending school as soon as they have completed their exams at the end of each term. The desire to help these learners prompted the motivation for this study. Consequently, I defined the research aim as follows:

#### **The research aim**

The development of Xhosa speaking learners' reading comprehension of English texts within the framework of action research cycles in an attempt to design and implement reading strategies that will contribute to improvement of the learners' reading comprehension and to encourage a sustained change in the comprehension instruction of the teachers.

Defining the research aim has led to the gathering of quantitative data before the reading strategy intervention could be implemented. These included the Baseline Test (see 4.4.1.1), the Burt Word Reading Test (see 4.4.1.2) and the Reading Strategy Test (see 4.4.1.3). In order to address the research problem, action research seemed to be the appropriate method to implement the intervention since the cycles allowed me to:

- identify the extent of the existing problem in my practice;
- identify possible limitations that may hamper the planning on how to address the problem(s);
- execute the plan and describe how the plan was executed;
- observe what transpired during the implementation of the plan; and
- reflect on possible ways to improve the actions taken (if any), based on what was observed during the implementation of the intervention.

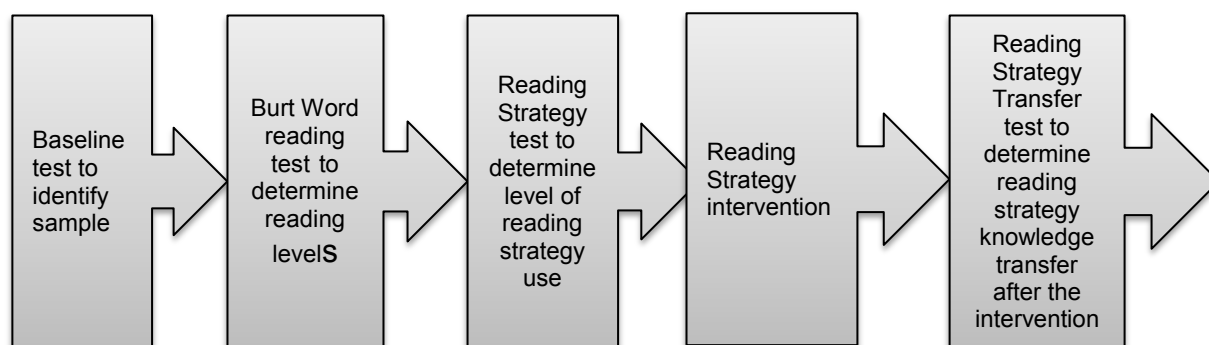
This sequence makes up a cycle of AR (see 4.1.2.1) which is subsequently repeated with the purpose of constantly improving it.

### 5.3.1 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF QUANTITATIVE DATA

#### 5.3.1.1 Investigative stage of the research problem (Defining the Issue)

In compliance with the AR cycle depicted above, this is the “investigative stage”, of the research problem which corresponds with “Define the issue” where the researcher probed into the “real life” situation in order to gain a wider insight of the scope of the research problem. At this stage I employed various quantitative research methods to gather data about the reading behaviour and levels of learners, namely, the Baseline Test (see 4.4.1.1), the Burt Word Reading Test (see 4.4.1.2) and the Reading Strategy Test (see 4.4.1.3). In order to substantiate the research problem, I gathered and interpreted the quantitative and qualitative data as presented in the graphic map below:

Graphic map of research methods to gather data during the research study



##### 5.3.1.1.1 Baseline Test results

The baseline test was administered to a whole Grade 8 isiXhosa class. The test was performed to obtain reliable baseline data on the learners’ reading comprehension skills and to identify possible research participants. For a discussion and a framework of the test questions see Chapter 4.4.1.1 - 4.4.1.1.2.

The test assessed various aspects of language knowledge. These included the Inferential section (Section A) where participants were required to answer questions and reach conclusions on the basis of evidence provided. The Cloze section (Section B) required of the learners to fill in the missing word and therefore tested their ability to make meaning in English. In Section C the learners’ Anaphoric understanding and comprehension of English was tested where they had to circle a word to show their ability to refer back to something as well as their knowledge of what is being referred to. Section D tested the

Word knowledge of the participants when they had to demonstrate their knowledge of the meaning of the given words.

After administering the baseline assessment, the following results were established with regard to the class average:

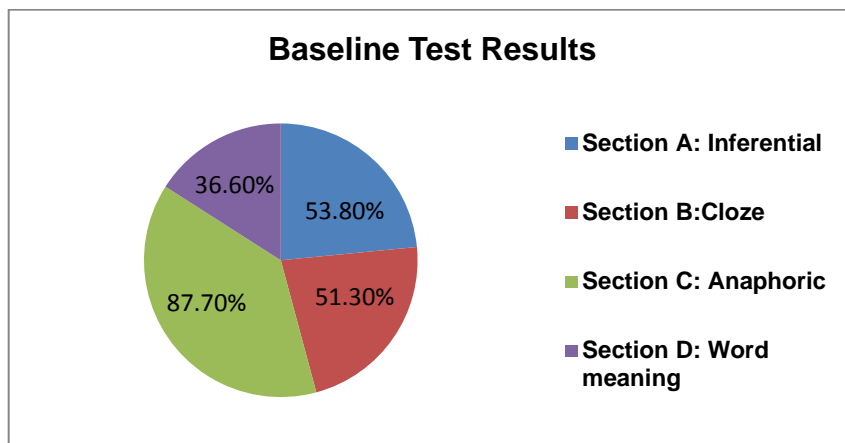


Figure 5: Class average percentage of baseline test

Analysis of the baseline assessment results revealed that the learners struggled with the Inferential (53.8%) and Cloze (51.3%) sections. The section where they scored the best was the Anaphoric section (87.7%), clearly demonstrating their ability to refer back to something in the text. However, a score of 36.6% on the Word meaning section undoubtedly showed an area of concern, indicating that these additional language learners had a weakness in terms of understanding the meaning of what they read. I chose the learners (as mentioned in 4.4.1.1.2) and invited them to join the research intervention. The next step was to test the reading age and reading level of these identified learners and for that I administered the Burt Word Reading Test (see 4. 4.1.2).

#### 5.3.1.1.2 Burt Word Reading Test results

The Burt Word Reading Test was administered to 7 isiXhosa learners who were identified and who volunteered to participate in the research intervention. This test was administered to determine participants' reading age and to compare their measured reading age to their real age. Apart from using the test to determine their word reading ability in order to select appropriate reading texts for implementation during the intervention, it was used to determine any correlation between the Burt word reading results and the Baseline results to ensure that I obtain a reliable score. After capturing the scores of each participant on the Burt Word Reading recording form, their Burt Word Reading Test ages were deducted from their real ages in order to determine the difference between the two ages.

<b>Learner</b>	<b>Real Age</b>	<b>Burt Age</b>	<b>Difference</b>
<b>Rose</b>	<b>14.11</b>	<b>12.0</b>	<b>2.11</b>
<b>Sunflower</b>	<b>14.8</b>	<b>8.5</b>	<b>6.3</b>
<b>Daffodil</b>	<b>16.1</b>	<b>11.11</b>	<b>4.99</b>
<b>Daisy</b>	<b>14.10</b>	<b>11.4</b>	<b>2.7</b>
<b>Violet</b>	<b>14.3</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>2.3</b>
<b>Poppy</b>	<b>15.4</b>	<b>9.1</b>	<b>6.3</b>
<b>Chrysanthemum</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>11.6</b>	<b>2.4</b>

*Table 8: Calculation of reading age difference (RAD)*

From the examples in Table 8 it is clear that all the participants showed a positive difference between their real age and their Burt reading age, which indicated that they have low levels of word knowledge, which will affect their ability to make meaning of texts.

#### **5.3.1.1.3 Questionnaires**

A questionnaire (Addendum F) to establish the socio-economic and cultural background was completed in order to gain insight into the lives of the children and examine aspects that might influence their reading. The self-reported data revealed:

- Although the majority of the participants like to read, many struggle to read some words in English.
- 87, 5% of the participants feel more comfortable with English than isiXhosa in the class, however, the same percentage understand instructions in English only sometimes.
- All of the participants enjoy being taught their subjects in English although the majority only speak isiXhosa at home.
- The only English books they have at home are magazines.
- While one participant lives with a guardian, 50% of the participants live in a single parent environment.
- The majority of the participants are not originally from Sharky Town but moved here with their parents.

The reported data from the questionnaires paints a picture of learners who have appropriated dominant attitudes towards English. Such attitudes do not always take personal circumstances and ability into account to engage in English on a daily basis.

#### 5.3.1.1.4 Reading Strategy Test (RST) results

The Reading Strategy Test (Addendum D) was administered before the implementation of the reading intervention. The purpose of the test was to determine whether the participants could use the following reading strategies: Determining the title of a reading text, Word meaning, Answering different types of questions (*Right There/ Think and Search/ On your Own*), Formulating their own questions relating to the text and Summarising what they have read (see 4.4.1.3 and Appendix D). I have chosen these measurements specifically for two reasons: (1) to train these strategies intensively during the intervention and, (2) for comparison with similar measurements from the Reading Strategy Transfer Test (RSTT) data after the intervention was done. After administering the Reading Strategy Test, the following results were established with regard to each participant measured in percentage.

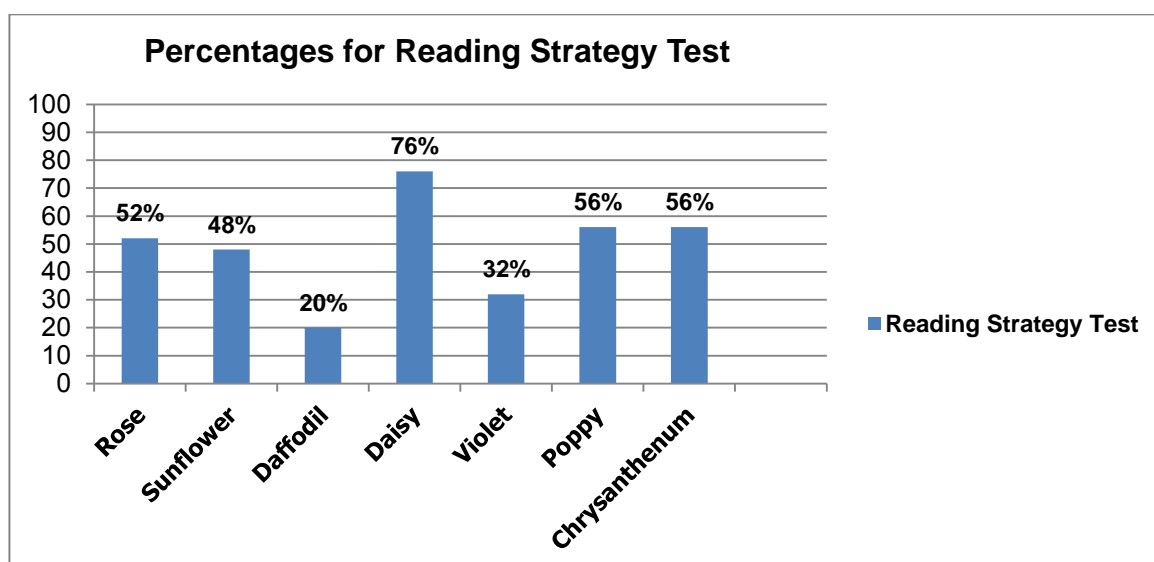


Figure 6: Percentages for each participant achieved in RST

Except for the participant who scored 76% on the RST, the rest didn't perform well. This is not surprising given the fact that they were not familiar with the strategies. Although the participants continuously have to answer comprehension questions in tests and examinations, they lacked the strategies and skills to deal with the questions on the test and the results show this.

After the RST was marked and scored by me, a colleague moderated the test and the following detailed interpretation emerged from the data.

*Supplying the reading text with a title:* The participants could supply the title (which they had to copy from the text), but most of them forgot to place a question mark at the end of the title.

*Answering questions:* The participants could answer the question when the answer was right there in the text, however, they found it difficult to think about a question and then search for the answer. Where the question required two answers, they answered one. It was also obvious that they were not familiar with the conventions of quoting, hence the missing quotation marks.

*Word meaning:* Few of the participants were in a position to replace the underlined word with a word similar in meaning from the text.

*Formulating questions:* This section proved to be extremely difficult for the participants. Although they have tried to formulate their own questions, they have made a lot of language mistakes, spelling mistakes, their sentence structure was incorrect and they forgot the question mark at the end of the question. Although this may seem trivial, they need to consolidate these writing conventions with a view to achieving good marks in higher grades.

*Summarising:* With the exception of two participants, they could not summarise relevant facts from the text. Some of the participants could not identify the main ideas, identify supporting sentences or summarise the text in their own words. All of the participants made too many language mistakes.

What transpired from the RST is that the participants were unable to adequately answer questions from a text when they had to think and search for the answer, they could not read instructions properly especially when the question needed two answers, they were unable to grasp the meaning of the word, their own questions were riddled with mistakes and were poorly constructed and most participants had no summarising skills. It became clear that the participants could not apply the above reading strategies and that they were in need of intervention strategies (see Addendum N for an example of a participant's test). Therefore, armed with the interpreted quantitative data, it was time to move to the next phase in the AR cycle: the planning phase.

#### **5.4.1 PLANNING PHASE**

In the previous section strategies that needed to be addressed in order to achieve the goals of improved reading comprehension at Sharky High School were identified. Consequently, the intervention strategies (see 3.2.3) which have been described in detail in chapter 3 were chosen. What was required at this stage was to put the planning phase of the AR cycle into action. (On the schematic representation of the AR cycle (*Figure 4*,

4.1.2.1) planning is described as “Plan action”). In order to plan the smooth implementation of the intervention, I had to focus on the outcomes (what goals I wanted to pursue) as well as on the limitations that could hamper the implementation process.

#### **5.4.1.1 Defining the outcomes**

Taking the research problem and data analysis of the required reading strategies in consideration, I am compelled to compile a detailed plan of the way forward. However, for the sake of maintaining focus in the study, I found it necessary to revisit the goals of this study as set out in Chapter 1:

To design and implement a reading strategy/intervention that can improve the Xhosa speaking learners’ reading comprehension of English texts;

To monitor and assess the impact of the reading intervention;

To implement appropriate methods and techniques based on insights gained from the literature review;

To critically reflect on each step of the implementation;

To implement a revised strategy if needed; and

To supply teachers with quantitative results to encourage a sustained change in their comprehension instruction.

#### **5.4.1.2 Methods of intervention**

Based on the inability of isiXhosa learners to understand the content of English texts diagnosed in the data gathered from several sources (baseline test, reading test and reading strategy test), the following reading intervention strategies were chosen: Activating prior knowledge, Monitoring/ Clarifying reading, Questioning and Summarising (see 3.2.3) in order to address and improve their reading comprehension. The implementation of the strategies mentioned here will be described extensively in the acting phase of the AR cycle.

With the outcomes and limitations of the project defined and the reading intervention strategies chosen, it was time to move into the next phase on the AR cycle, namely, “Act/ intervene” on the diagram (*Figure 4*). During the acting phase of the AR cycle, the chosen interventions are implemented.

I will therefore proceed by describing in detail how each of the chosen reading strategies in the research study had been implemented.



## 5.5 IMPLEMENTING THE INTERVENTION: CYCLE 1

### 5.5.1 Activating prior knowledge

Activating prior knowledge is an activity that takes place in the pre-reading phase before the text is actually read. This strategy requires that both learners and teachers participate in a discussion about the text and it includes scanning of the title, chapter headings, illustrations or any explanatory materials on the page. The purpose of activating prior knowledge is to urge learners to initiate their own knowledge about a related topic before reading a text. For the purpose of this phase of the reading intervention in cycle 1, learners received a reading text about “*Wild Dogs*” (see Addendum L). Wild Dogs is an informational article about the surviving, hunting and sociable nature of these dogs. It also highlights the reasons why the African wild dogs are on the brink of becoming extinct in the wild.

What follows is the actual example of the discussion between me and the research participants while using the strategy.

R: I want all of you to look at the page I have given you. What do you see on the page?

Rose: (raises her hand) ... a dog, miss.

R: Very good Rose. Do you have a dog?

Rose: No miss.

R: Who of you have a dog at home? (Violet and Daisy raised their hands)

R: Daisy, can you tell me what do we call animals that live with people at home?

Daisy: I.... I don't know miss.

Poppy: I know, mam... we say pets.

R: Yes, Poppy... animals that live with people at home are called pets.

R: Who can tell me why do we call our animals at home, pets?

(Learners are reluctant to answer the question at first. Poppy raised her hand)

R: Yes, Poppy why do we call them pets? Do you know?

Poppy: They sleep in our house, mam.

R: That's right Poppy they sleep in our house, but there are more reasons why we call them pets. Who can give us another reason?

R: Chrysanthemum?

Chrysanthemum: We give them food, miss.

R: You are absolutely right Chrysanthemum, in other words, we look after our pets.

R: Violet, do you think the dog in the picture is a pet dog?

Violet: Ummm... no mam.

R: You are right Violet, but why is the dog in the picture not a pet?

Violet: I don't know mam.

R: Can anyone tell me?

R: Yes, Sunflower... can you tell me?

Sunflower: I think a wild dog, miss.

R: Very good Sunflower. Yes, it is a wild dog.

R: Would you like to have a wild dog as a pet, Daffodil?

Daffodil: No, miss.

R: Why not?

Daffodil: I'm scared the dog will bite me, miss.

R: Why do you think wild dogs cannot live at people's houses? Rose?

Rose: The dogs will bite the people, miss.

R: Yes, Rose maybe the wild dogs will bite the people, but they are wild animals and have to live in the wild.

R: Now, I want all of you to look at the title on the page.

R: Let's read the title together. [*What's Wild about African Wild Dogs?*] (Learners and researcher read the title)

R: Right learners, now that we have read the title is there anyone who can tell me what the reading text will be about? Sunflower, what do you think?

Sunflower: I think dogs, miss.

R: Yes, this reading is all about dogs that live in the wild. If we look below the title we will see the person's name who wrote this article... Catherine Fox. (I asked the learners to repeat the name after me)

R: If we look below the writer's name we see another question. I want you to listen while I read the question for you... What's the difference between African wild dogs and the dogs we know as pets?

R: In the question I have read is a word that tells us what the reading is really about. Who can tell me the word?

R: Rose, Sunflower, Anyone?

[The learners could not tell the word]

R: Okay... we know that the reading is about wild dogs, but the word I was looking for is "difference".

R: The word "difference" means that a wild dog is not the same as a pet dog. When we are going to read the text we will see what is different between a wild dog and a pet dog.

The meaning of this interaction will be discussed in detail in section 5.6 when the analysis and interpretation of Qualitative Data: CYCLE 1 is reported.

### 5.5.2 Monitoring/ Clarifying reading

Monitoring/ Clarifying is an activity that is implemented while the text is being read and it requires the participants to be actively involved and monitor their comprehension as they read the text. Learners are also being taught to recognise difficult parts of the text and are then driven to take the necessary steps to understand what they are reading. For the purpose of this activity I have continued with the same reading text we used in activating prior knowledge, namely *"Wild dogs"*.

Before I started this strategy I asked a few questions in order to refresh the participants' knowledge of the topic (see 5.3.3.1) we have done before the commencement of the March school holiday. I asked the participants to read and stop at the first pre-selected point in the reading (The text was already written in paragraphs therefore it was easy to determine the stopping points in the text). The participants read the first paragraph on their own for a few minutes and they had to underline all the words they did not understand. *"Domestic"*, *"survive"* and *"pups"* were identified as words that they did not understand. In line with Monitoring/Clarifying strategy the participants were asked to reread the paragraph and think what they know about the word *"domestic"*, *"survive"* and *"pups"*. I wrote the word and three answers (small/home/wild) on the writing board and asked each participant to choose the word she thought was the correct meaning of the word,

domestic. Different answers were given. I had to step in and use examples that they could relate to in order to clarify the meaning of the word. The same procedure was followed to explain the word “*survive*” and “*pups*”, since the participants found it difficult to correctly explain the meaning of these words. Next, I wanted to determine to what extent they have reflected on the content they read in paragraph one by prompting them with questions, for example, “*What is the difference between the toes of wild dogs and domestic dogs?*”, “*Why can a wild dog never be a pet dog?*”, “*Why do wild dogs need to hunt for their food every day?*” After reading and explaining the first paragraph, the participants were requested to write down the words and the meaning of domestic, survive and pups in their journals.

Next, the participants were instructed to read the rest of the text (the other three paragraphs). By doing this, the participants were given ample time and opportunities to practise the process I modelled during the first paragraph. I urged the participants to ask themselves the following questions, for example (*How do you pronounce that?*, *What does the word mean, I think the author is saying...What other words could we use in place of...?*) if they do not understand what they read. However, after they had identified and written down the difficult vocabulary words in the text, they were sent to the library to find the meaning of the words on their own by using dictionaries (This ended the contact lesson for the day and they had enough time to visit the library since I expected to see them back the following week for a continuance of the lesson). Upon returning to the session the following week, I continued by asking each one of the participants to give a word they found difficult and explain the meaning of that word. The lesson further continued by verbally asking and answering questions about the content of the text.

### 5.5.3 Questioning

A general practice when dealing with comprehension questions is the assumption that questioning is confined to answering only *after* the text has been read. However, Moreillon (2007:59) is of the opinion that asking and answering questions should take place before, during and after reading a text to enable readers to “develop and maintain interaction with the text”. To implement the questioning intervention strategy I made use of the QAR approach (see 3.2.4.5) which according to Raphael & Au (2005:208) is a “straight forward approach” and an effective strategy to closing the literacy achievement gap. Sorrell (1966) believes that QAR is a useful tool in encouraging learners to actively read texts and comprehend the questions based on the source of information essential for the answer.

Participants were handed out the same reading text (*Wild dogs*) we used for the previous implemented phases (when activating prior knowledge and monitoring reading). Although the QAR approach consists of four types of questions, three types were chosen for implementation in this study, namely, *Right There* (the answers are easily found in the text), *Think & Search* (you have to put together different parts of the text to find the answer) and *On your Own* (the answer is not in the text and require own ideas and experiences to answer the question). Before implementing this strategy, I made the participants aware of the fact that they will be taught to ask and answer different types of questions in the lesson.

Focusing the participants' attention on the different types of questions (mentioned above), I wrote the questions individually on the writing board while pronouncing and explaining the nature of each question. After reading the first paragraph in the text, I wrote the following questions on the board: "*Where do wild dogs live?*", "*How many toes does a wild dog have?*", "*Name two animals that have five toes*". I specifically formulated these questions because I wanted to start teaching *Right There* questions to the participants first before teaching the two remaining question types, because learners generally find these types of questions easier to comprehend. The participants were asked to tell me under which heading they thought the questions should be written. Most of the participants guessed and it was understandable that they would do so, because up to this point none of the participants had been taught question types. Dealing with each question at a time, I modelled the first two questions and showed the participants under which heading each question should be placed and how to find the answers in the first paragraph of the text. They had to read the remaining question and find the answer in the text on their own.

The participants proceeded by working in groups of two, reading the next three paragraphs and formulating a *Right There* question from each paragraph. (Samples of the participants' questions will be tabulated later under the observation phase, see 5.6.3.) In the follow-up lesson the next day I collected the *Right There* questions formulated by the participants and wrote them on the board. We went through each question, eliminating the incorrect ones in an effort to reinforce the concept of the *Right There* question type.

Following the same procedure as described above, teaching *Think & Search* (you have to put together different parts of the text to find the answer) and *On your Own* (the answer is not in the text and require own ideas and experiences to answer the question) questions, required three lessons because it was apparent that the participants found these types of questions more difficult than the *Right There* questions. After modelling these question

types with ample examples and a session to make the participants aware of the differences between *Think & Search* and *On your Own* questions, they were given an opportunity to practise constructing their own questions. Judging from the questions in Table 9 (see 5.6.3) it appears that the participants found it difficult to differentiate between *Think & Search* and *On your Own* questions. The appropriate solution seemed to resort to the procedure followed with the *Right There* questions by writing their questions on the board and asking the participants to practise placing the questions under the correct heading using the elimination process.

#### 5.5.4 Summarisation

Summarisation of a reading text requires the recall and reorganization of the text. Results from the Reading Strategy Test (see 5.3.1.4) showed that the participants could not summarise relevant facts from the text and they were unable to use their own words but rather copied the sentences from the text. By neglecting to include the main ideas and supporting details of the text in their summaries clearly showed that the participants had no formal summary instruction, and were therefore unfamiliar with the strategy.

The same reading text (*“Wild dogs”*), used for the previous strategies in this cycle of the intervention, was used for the summarisation strategy. Being aware that the participants were unable to summarise the whole text in their Reading Strategy Test, the appropriate approach was to implement this strategy paragraph-by-paragraph. Before reading the first paragraph out loud, I explained the purpose of summarising a text to the participants (to see if we understand the content of the text we have read) and how we were going to summarise “Wild Dogs” step-by-step. Working in groups of two, the participants were expected to listen very carefully and try to find the main idea of the paragraph while I was reading the first paragraph. They also had to find a supporting sentence for the main idea. The participants were then asked to present their summaries of the first paragraph verbally, and in doing so, I created an opportunity to focus their attention on the correct usage of sentence structure and the use of their own words. What emerged was an accurate summary of the first paragraph as one of the examples shows:

*African wild dogs live in Africa, south of the Sahara desert.*

*The dogs hunt for food every day.*

*The dogs are not good pets.*

The participants were given time to work through the remaining three paragraphs on their own and this proved to be a time-consuming process. However, in the discussion that followed, progress could be observed while the participants presented the main ideas and supporting sentences of the three paragraphs verbally. Thereafter they were asked to write a summary of the entire text. (At this stage I wanted to teach them *how* to summarise a text first, before they have to write it by using a certain amount of words). (Examples of the participants' summaries are provided in Addendum H1).

## 5.6 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF QUALITATIVE DATA: CYCLE 1

### 5.6.1 Activating prior knowledge

When probing the participants with a question about the picture on the page, they could easily identify the dog in the picture and activate their prior knowledge of dogs given the fact that dogs are a familiar part of their existence.

*R: I want all of you to look at the page I have given you. What do you see on the page?*

*Rose: (raises her hand) ... a dog, miss.*

However, when asked to explain why we call our animals "pets", the participants (except one) appeared quite reluctant to answer the question.

*R: Who can tell me why do we call our animals at home, pets?*

*(Learners are reluctant to answer the question at first. Poppy raised her hand)*

*R: Yes, Poppy why do we call them pets? Do you know?*

*Poppy: They sleep in our house, mam.*

It was evident that they struggled with explaining the meaning of the word (pets), hence their hesitance when they were asked to explain what a pet is. Although Gee (2004:39) is of the opinion that "humans understand content much better when they can relate that content to activities, discussions, talk and dialogue", it was obvious that these participants were not used to engaging with a text in this manner: answering questions and discussing the text before they had even read the text.

Touching on the title of the article proved that the participants found it difficult to listen for deeper meaning, given their inability to spot the word "difference" which was the essence the article.

R: *If we look below the writer's name we see another question. I want you to listen while I read the question for you... What's the difference between African wild dogs and the dogs we know as pets?*

R: *In the question I have read is a word that tells us what the reading text is really about. Who can tell me the word?*

R: *Rose, Sunflower, Anyone?* [The learners could not tell the word]

Having a discussion related to the content of the topic seemed foreign to the participants, who might have in the past only been exposed to the explaining of difficult vocabulary words, after the text has been read. Although the participants appeared a little surprised by the implementation of this strategy at first, they gradually grew accustomed to the discussion (through questions and answers) about wild dogs, and could predict what the text was about as the next extracts of the class conversation display.

R: *Now that we have read the title, is there anyone who can tell me what the reading will be about? Sunflower, what do you think?*

Sunflower: *I think dogs, miss.*

### **5.6.2 Monitoring/ Clarifying reading**

Although the activating prior knowledge strategy was implemented before the school holidays in March, the participants could readily answer the questions I posed to them about the topic. However, the implementation of the Monitoring/ Clarifying strategy seemed easier said than done. It took two lessons to implement the Monitoring/ Clarifying strategy since it proved more difficult for the participants to grasp than activating their prior knowledge about the same topic.

While reading the first paragraph, I observed how hard they concentrated (one of the participants was still reading by pointing to every word with her finger). The words they identified in the first paragraph (domestic, survive, pups) were not difficult by all means, because they could pronounce the words. What made the words difficult in their opinion was the fact that they did not know the *meaning* of the words. When the participants were asked to think about the words, they automatically switched to their mother tongue when they were given group discussion time. Although I do not normally use or allow code-switching as a teaching or learning technique, it served in this case as a means to facilitate teaching and learning in an additional language classroom. By allowing code



switching I agree with Auerbach (1993:20), who sees code switching as a “tool to develop proficiency in English”, by “reducing anxiety and allows for learner-centered curriculum development”. While Van der Walt (1997) is reminding us that code switching should be acknowledged as a powerful resource, Ferguson (2006:193) identifies code switching as a useful resource to “ameliorate” the difficult situation of using a foreign language as a medium of instruction.

By adopting this approach, participants are able to establish context more easily than they would if they had to keep to the target language. Asking them what they thought the word “domestic” meant, they could not give a satisfactory explanation, therefore I wrote the word and three answers (*small/home/wild*) on the writing board. The participants however chose different words they thought fit the given word. Only after giving them a few examples they began to understand the meaning of the word “domestic”. The same happened with the words “survive” and “pups”. I had to make use of real life examples in order for them to grasp the meaning of those words.

Asking the participants to look up the meaning of the words by using dictionaries, introduced them to a powerful tool and drove them to take the necessary steps to understand what they were reading. Very encouraging was the fact that each participant could give me a word and the meaning of that word after they had looked up the words in a dictionary. By writing down the vocabulary words and their meaning armed the participants with a strategy that they can implement in any content subject.

In contrast to their understanding of the meaning of words, the participants didn't find it particularly difficult to answer easy questions (see 5.3.4) about the content of the first paragraph. However, it was a different situation when they had to answer more difficult questions about the rest of the text. Here, we worked through each paragraph systematically in order to improve the participants' understanding of the text.

### 5.6.3 Questioning

For a more in-depth discussion on what transpired during the questioning strategy I present the following tabulation of the participants' *Think & Search*, *Right There* and *On your Own* questions.

Question Type (Text 1)	Correct example	Incorrect example
Right There	Where do the wild dogs live? How far can a wild dog run? Name three animals they hunt.	
Think & Search	What is different about the toes of the wild dog? Do wild dogs look the same as pet dogs? How do the dogs feed their pups every day?	Do you want a wild dog to be your pet? Are the farmers right by killing the dogs?
On Your Own	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you want a wild dog to be your pet?</li> <li>• Are the farmers right by killing the dogs?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is different about the toes of the wild dog?</li> </ul> Name three animals they hunt.

Table 9: Examples of the participants' questions

Being able to identify and answer comprehension questions on a given text is the centre of this research problem and therefore it was of utmost importance that the participants understood this strategy. Although I had explained each question type (*Right There*, *Think & Search* and *On your Own*) in detail to the participants, they were not able to correctly place each of the questions (*"Where do wild dogs live?", "How many toes does a wild dog have?", "Name two animals that have five toes"*) I wrote on the board, under the correct heading. Guessing the answer was clearly an indication that they had no recollection of the different types of questions usually found in a text. However, after modelling the questions and training them how to find the answers in the text, the participants began to grasp the concept. As shown in Table 9, they were able to formulate their own *Right There* questions on the remaining paragraphs of the reading text.

A different scenario could be observed when we dealt with *Think & Search* (you have to put together different parts of the text to find the answer) and *On your Own* questions (the answer is not in the text and require own ideas and experiences to answer the question). The participants progressed much slower than anticipated. The above concepts appeared to be fairly difficult for them to grasp. Nevertheless, using the elimination process when it comes to placing the sentences under the correct headings, created an opportunity for the participants to become aware of the differences between the two types of questions.

The fact that most of the participants confused *Think & Search* questions with *On your Own* questions is evidence of their unfamiliarity with engaging with the text by looking and re-looking for information to answer the question. Therefore, as far as my observation of

the questioning strategy is concerned it is apparent that much more practice is needed in future, especially in formulating and being able to answer *Think & Search* and *On your Own* questions.

#### 5.6.4 Summarisation

Teaching summarising skills is a difficult and time-consuming activity that can only be perfected with regular practice. Although the participants seemed to be familiar with the text by now, they were unsure of the procedure of summarising a text. At first their attempts of summarising the text were more “retelling” than summarising, (as displayed in their RST summaries) but they eventually understood the concept and progressed as the strategy became more familiar through practice.

Breaking up the text in paragraphs seemed to have helped the participants to find the main idea of each paragraph more quickly than in the case of the Reading Strategy Test where they had to summarise the entire text, as the following examples show:

Daffodil:

*African wild dogs live in Africa, south of the Sahara desert. If they have travel so far the researchers use radio collars to keep them on track. They like to live in packs of about six to 20 animals and farmers poison the wild dogs.*

Rose:

*African wild dogs live in Africa, south of the Sahara. The researchers use collars to track them. The wild dogs are smart and sociable. There is a huge difference between domestic and wild dogs.*

Although the summaries were not perfect at all and the participants copied the text, at least they showed an understanding of the *main ideas* of the text as seen in these examples.

### 5.7 CONCLUDING THOUGHTS OF CYCLE 1

The previous subheadings (5.3.3 to 5.3.6) refer to the phases of Action Research cycle 1. This cycle of the intervention enabled me to determine and monitor my progress while working through the AR phases as precisely as possible. Accordingly, to report the results before moving on to cycle 2 is consistent with the final order on *Figure 4*. Reporting the results means tying up the threads of the research thus far, and paving the way for the

second cycle to begin with all the facts at hand. Before reporting on what transpired during the implementation of the intervention in the first cycle, I want to touch on the external influences (LoLT, school attendance and literacy levels of research participants) that had an impact on the intervention up to that point.

Although reading strategy instruction can be applied to any language with the aim to improve comprehension, implementing reading strategies in a language (English) which is not the research participants' mother tongue (which is isiXhosa) could prove challenging as displayed by the research subjects in the intervention. Not having sufficient exposure to reading in English had an effect on the participants' understanding of the content of the reading texts presented during the intervention, because they have not yet developed the ability. This fact was conspicuous when the participants had to monitor their reading. The lack of vocabulary and critical thinking skills when asked to infer the meaning of difficult words in the text was clearly noticeable. As mentioned in 1.2.1 it is difficult for these learners to comprehend information provided/taught in a second language with which they have limited contact. The reason why the parents prefer that their children be taught in English (as in the case at the research school) could be because they also believe as Kamwangamalu (2002:16) does when he states "...all the population groups of South Africa perceive English as an open sesame by means of which one can achieve unlimited upward social mobility". Despite the fact that English is only one of the 11 official languages in South Africa, Moonsamy (1995:4) concludes that the "acquisition of English has become a status symbol amongst Blacks". Not only is the language of teaching and learning at the research school a barrier to these participants, their literacy levels in English are below appropriate level for their grade. The Burt Word Reading Test and Baseline Test performed before the implementation of the intervention displayed the reading levels of the participants with a measured reading age of up to six years lower than their real age (see 5.3.1.2).

Irregular school attendance of the participants also affected the intervention in cycle one. Although the chosen participants were not affected by any transport problems that contributed to the (sometimes) low attendance of learners at the research school, rainy days and factors outside their control, e.g., staff meetings, subject meetings or sport had an influence on whether a certain strategy could be implemented regularly on the set date or had to be postponed.

Although Gee (2004:39) is of the opinion that that "humans understand content ...much better when...they can relate that content to possible activities, decisions, talk and

dialogue”, what became clear from the onset of the intervention was that reading strategy instruction seemed to introduce a new procedure to the participants and it took time for them to become accustomed to this way of teaching. The reason might be that these participants were used to dealing with comprehension texts in a manner where the texts were given to them without prior discussion or answering pre-set questions about the content of the text. Looking at the different reading strategies used during the first cycle of the intervention, it is clear that activating their prior knowledge seemed more successful than monitoring their reading. The lack of vocabulary and critical thinking skills when asked to infer the meaning of difficult words in the text was clearly noticeable. Asking questions from the text seemed problematic and exposed their poor comprehension skills.

However, once the participants became more familiar practising the reading strategies, they adapted quickly and showed progress, especially in summarising a text. Encouraging the participants to make use of dictionaries to find the meanings of words taught them an extra skill in improving their understanding of a text and will hopefully become part of their reading strategy while monitoring their reading not only in English but in other content subjects as well.

## **5.8 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF QUALITATIVE DATA: CYCLE 2**

For cycle 2, I used the same reading strategies, e.g., Activating prior knowledge, Monitoring reading, Questioning and Summarising in order to gather qualitative data. At this stage the intention was to refine the interventions in order to improve the areas of concern that became clear in cycle 1. Activating prior knowledge seemed to be the strategy that was the easiest to grasp by the participants, however, the lack of monitoring skills, formulating and answering different types of questions and the lack of summarising skills strongly surfaced during implementation of the intervention in cycle 1. Planning the intervention strategy material for the next cycle didn't take up the same amount of time as it did while planning the first cycle. Knowing the exact areas of concern, I started looking at age-appropriate material to implement the different reading strategies (monitoring, questioning and summarising) which needed refinement. I found the text I was looking for in the Grade 8 Life Orientation book. The reading passage is about a young girl (Ann) who was very determined to become a provincial swimmer and her dedication to the sport. The passage also talks about her dream to become a personal trainer. Choosing the topic had a dual purpose: Firstly, swimming is a topic that is within the participants' reference framework, and secondly, the story has a moral lesson, that by working hard you can achieve your dreams.

I started my engagement with cycle 2 with positive expectation. What follows is a report of the implementation, observation and reflection of the reading strategies in cycle 2.

### **5.8.1 Activating prior knowledge**

As in cycle 1, the participants could immediately relate to the picture on the page I gave them, because swimming is not a foreign concept to them since they also practise the same activity, albeit not in the same way as the girl in the picture. Probing questions (Do you like swimming?, Is swimming a good exercise?, If you want to be a good swimmer what must you do every day?, Do you know somebody who is swimming like the girl in the picture?, Do you think the girl is practicing for a competition or swimming for pleasure?, Who do you think is teaching the girl to swim? What kind of food do you think you have to eat if you are a swimmer?), posed to the participants not only activated their prior knowledge of swimming, but through the questions I posed to them we also touched on the content before I asked the participants to read the text.

Contrary to cycle 1 where the discussion of a text before reading seemed a foreign concept to the participants, this time they appeared quite eager to participate in the discussion about swimming. Whether their eagerness to participate could be ascribed to the fact that the topic we discussed was within their knowledge framework, nevertheless, the observation revealed that they were willing to participate in the strategy of activating their prior knowledge about a topic and predicting what they think the text is about.

### **5.8.2 Monitoring/ Clarifying**

After a lengthy discussion of the picture and content of the text during the previous strategy (activating prior knowledge) it was time for the participants to practise monitoring their reading. I asked them to read the text silently on their own and monitored their reading by identifying difficult words in the text they do not understand. The rationale behind my approach is the fact that they are expected to deal with reading comprehension texts on their own in any test or examination when the teacher is not allowed to read the texts to them.

Upon reading the text, the following difficult words were identified by the participants: *determined*, *organised*, *disciplined* and *focused*. In cycle 1, when the participants had to deal with words they did not understand, they had been introduced to dictionaries as a tool

to find the meaning of the words. The question was, would they remember to use dictionaries as a part of their reading strategy to infer the meaning of difficult words, without being told to do so? Great was my joy when the participants made use of dictionaries to find the meanings of the words they have identified without encouraging them. With this approach they clearly demonstrated that I have taught them a skill they could apply to any subject in the future.

### 5.8.3 Questioning

Results from cycle 1 have shown that the questioning strategy is difficult for the participants to grasp, especially formulating their own questions. Learners constantly have to answer questions relating to texts in any content subject and undoubtedly this strategy needs to be taught and practised intensively in order to show improvement. After reading the text, the participants were asked to write two questions under the following headings, e.g., *Right There*, *Think & Search* and *On your Own*.

Although numerous language mistakes were evident in their questions, the participants showed no difficulty in formulating *Right There* questions and therefore proved that they have mastered this concept. Despite the fact that a slight improvement in the *Think & Search* questions could be observed, some of the participants still struggled to correctly formulate these types of questions. Formulating *On your Own* questions once again proved to be the area where the participants experienced the most difficulty. While two of the participants could correctly formulate their questions, the rest failed in their efforts. Examples of the participants' questions are provided below.

Questions formulated by the participants (Text: Ann)

*Right There Questions:* 1. *What does Ann want to become one day?*

2. *How many times does she go to the public pool?*

The above examples prove that the participants could formulate *Right There* questions correctly.

*Think & Search Questions:* 1. *What must she do to be disciplined?*

2. *Do you think this girl is going to be a good coach?*

3. *Is Ann a good swimmer? Why?*



From the examples of *Think & Search* questions above only number 1 is correctly formulated while numbers 2 and 3 are *On your Own* questions, thus showing that some of the participants still struggled to formulate these types of questions.

*On your Own Questions:* 1. *Does Ann eat a health food?*

2. *Does Ann a good swimmer?*

3. *Do you think she will be the best personal trainer?*

Besides the incorrect language use, the above examples of *On your Own* questions also proved that the participants had difficulty in formulating the questions correctly as questions 1 and 2 indicate. It also shows that these learners need much more practice to improve their question formulating skills.

#### **5.8.4 Summarising**

As previously stated, teaching summarising skills is a difficult and time-consuming activity that can only be perfected by ample practising. Although the participants had previously struggled with the format of summarising a text, this time most of their summaries had all the elements of a summarised text. They produced summaries which contained main ideas and supporting sentences. They further tried to use their own words as far as possible. Even though their spelling and sentence construction were not perfect, it was clear that they understood the content of the text and therefore could produce acceptable summaries.

The following are examples of summaries written by two of the research participants (No title provided, participants had to provide one):

Daffodil: (pseudonym)

*Ann always do good in school events. She practise every afternoons and over weekend. She take part in swimming events. She need time to do her schoolwork and chores at home and time to play with her friends. She have to eat healthy food and get enough sleep. Because swimming take a lot of energy now she always focused. She know that she can't be a swimmer for the whole life and she wanted something that will connect with sport like personal trainer or coach.*



## Poppy

*Ann is a good swimmer, She do well at school swimming events. Ann wants to swim to provincial team one day. Ann practises every day and well on weekends that makes her to wake up early so that she can swim in a school pool before classes start. And she practises three times afternoons a week. She go to a public pool. Ann found that she must organised and disciplined. The swimmer must eat healthily food and get enough sleep. Ann want to be a coach or personal trainer one day.*

The above summaries represent examples of two participants' summarising texts of Text 2 (Ann). I chose these summaries because they are representative of the summaries all the participants did. The summaries were assessed by judging whether the participants could sum up the main ideas of each paragraph of the text and whether they could summarise the text in their own words. What is clear from the summaries above is the fact that their language use is not perfect, but the participants demonstrated an understanding of the concept of summarisation. Their main ideas and supporting sentences capture the essence of the reading text. In contrast to the previous summaries from Text 1 (Wild dogs) (see 5.6.4) where the participants copied most of the text, the above summaries were written in their own words.

## 5.9 POST-INTERVENTION ANALYSIS OF QUANTITATIVE DATA

### 5.9.1 Analysis of Reading Strategy Transfer Test (RSTT)

Post intervention data was gathered through the use of a Reading Strategy Transfer Test (RSTT) with the purpose of assessing to which extent transfer of reading strategy knowledge (Supplying a Title, Answering questions, Word meaning, Generating questions and Summarising) had taken place (if any). As mentioned in 4.4.1.4, the data captured from the RSTT was for direct comparison between the participants' strategy knowledge before (RST) and, after the research intervention (RSTT) had been implemented. Analysis and discussion of the data from the Reading Strategy Test (RST) had been done in 5.3.1.4.

The focus of the following section will fall on the analysis and discussion of comparative data captured from the RST and RSTT.

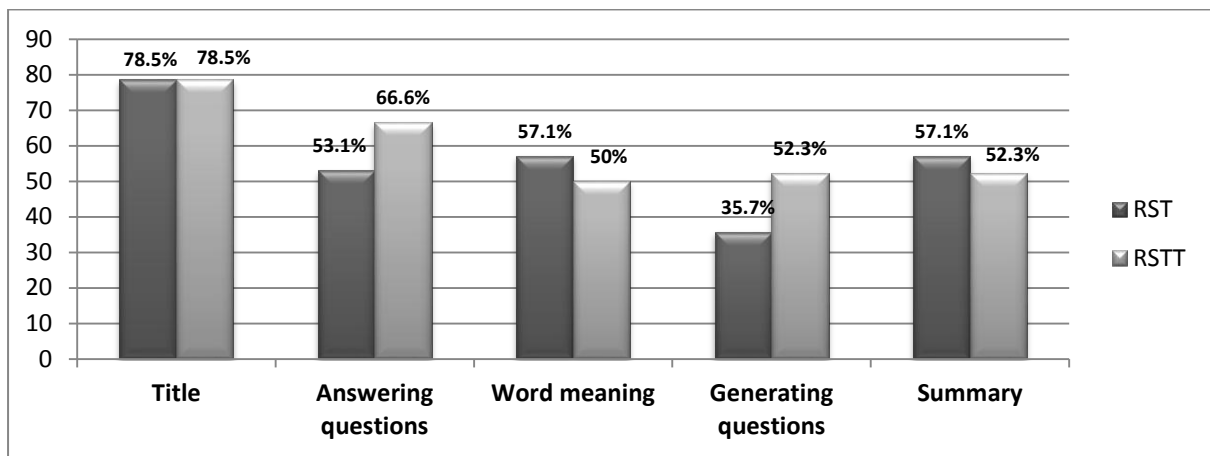


Figure 7: Comparison between RST and RSTT measurement results for all the participants

### 5.9.2 Results

The results as displayed in Figure 7 show the comparative scores achieved by the same participants for both the Reading Strategy Test (before the intervention) and Reading Strategy Transfer Test (after the intervention). For both Tests five measurements (Title, Word meaning, Answering questions, Generating questions and Summary) were taken. Although questioning seemed to be the most difficult strategy to comprehend during the intervention, it showed the biggest improvement in the RSTT with a 13.5% increase in answering questions and 16.6% in generating questions. It is therefore evident that the participants' knowledge of the intervention strategy increased which produced positive results.

Word meaning was measured in both tests to check whether the participants understood and monitored their reading. While participants were allowed to make use of dictionaries in order to find the meaning of difficult words during the intervention, they were not allowed to use dictionaries while writing both the Reading Strategy Test and Reading Strategy Transfer Test. This was done specifically with their English examination in mind when they may not use dictionaries. What emerged was a 7.1% decrease in comparative results.

With a decrease of 4.8%, summary writing proved to be another disappointing result. While my observations during the intervention concluded that the participants showed improvement in their summaries of the texts presented to them, this was not the result during the Reading Strategy Transfer Test. This could most probably be ascribed to the fact that during the intervention the participants dealt with the same text and therefore the familiarity of the text could have been a contributing factor when writing their summaries. The graph below depicts the pre- and post-intervention percentages of the individual participants.

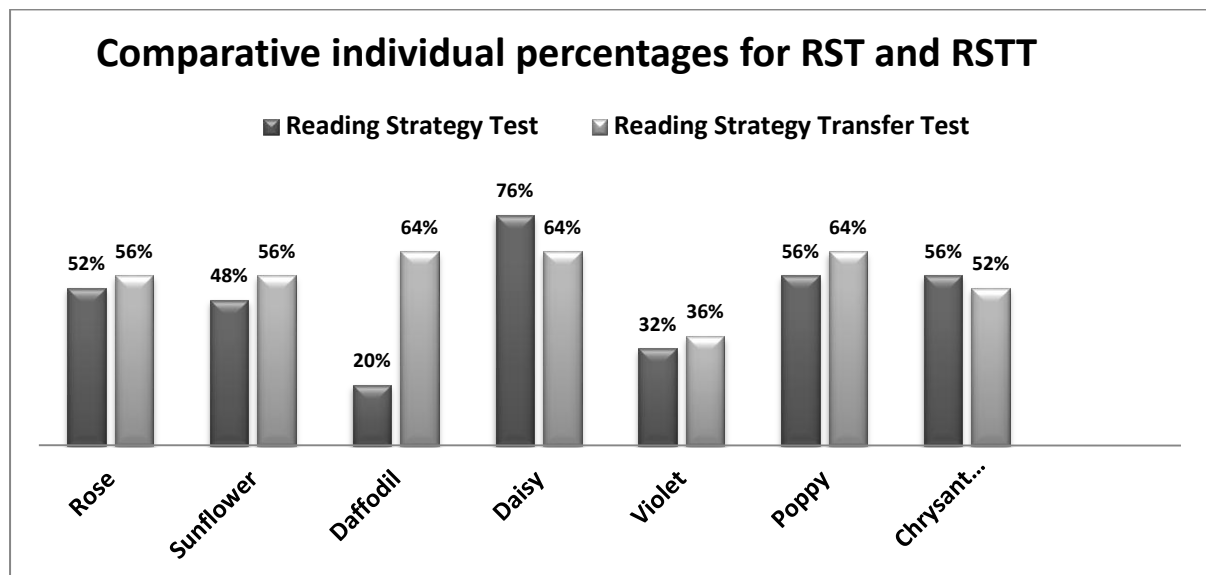


Figure 8: Individual comparative scores for RST and RSTT

Evident from figure 8, the results show an increase in all but two of the individual scores. Although the improvement in some scores was not enormous, and some scores had decreased, the biggest improvement was 44%, which is an indication that measurable strategy knowledge had been transferred for this learner during the intervention.

In Figure 7 the individual comparative *percentages* between the RST and RSTT of the participants were reported. What follows in Table 10 is an illustration of the performance of each participant on the measured strategies (title, answering questions, generating questions, monitoring reading (word meaning) and summarising) both in the RST and RSTT.

Participant	RAD	→						RST Total	RSTT Total	←				
		Title	Q1	Q2	M	S				Title	Q1	Q2	M	S
Rose	<b>2.11</b>	2	4	3	2	2		13	14	1	6	5	0	2
Sunflower	<b>6.3</b>	2	7	2	0	1		12	14	2	7	3	1	1
Daffodil	<b>4.99</b>	1	2	1	0	1		5	16	2	7	3	2	2
Daisy	<b>2.7</b>	2	8	2	2	3		17	16	2	5	5	2	2
Violet	<b>2.3</b>	2	3	2	0	1		8	9	1	2	5	0	1
Poppy	<b>6.3</b>	2	7	1	2	2		14	16	2	3	7	2	2
Chrysanthemum	<b>2.4</b>	0	6	4	2	2		14	13	1	6	5	0	1

Table 10: Difference between Reading Strategy Test and Reading Strategy Transfer Test results for participants

(Table adapted from Klapwijk, 2011:205)

The results in Table 10 show that some of the participants' knowledge of the intervention strategies shows an improvement regardless of their reading age difference (RAD) (see 5.3.1.1.2, Table 8). An example of this: In the case of Daffodil, strategy knowledge transfer took place in all the measured strategies as evident on the RSTT, despite her RAD of

4.99. As discussed in 5.9.2 (Figure 7), the Questioning (answering and generating questions) measurement shows the biggest increase in scores between the RST and RSTT. Participants' performance on the Monitoring (Word meaning) and Summarising measurement fluctuated as indicated in the table above, which resulted in a 7.1% and 4.8%, decrease in comparative results respectively, (see 5.9.2, Figure 7).

### 5.9.3 Comparison of March and June Examination Results

What follows below are the results of the participants' pre and post intervention averages for English First Additional Language. The results are given of the seven (7) participants who started and finished the intervention. The percentages shown below are the scores they received for their March and June English examinations.

Pseudonym	March	June	Difference
Rose	45	51	6 (+)
Sunflower	33	52	19 (+)
Daffodil	36	63	27 (+)
Daisy	46	55	9 (+)
Violet	30	46	16 (+)
Poppy	41	41	0
Chrysanthemum	40	39	1 (-)

Table 11: Comparative scores for March and June

As the English FAL teacher for the higher grades, I have no insight in the Grade 8 learners' performance in English. However, when these above-mentioned learners became my invited research participants, I needed to acquaint myself with their English ability in formal tests and examinations before the start of the intervention. For this reason I requested to see their English scores for March (I had no part in the setting or marking of their tests).

After the June examination (which I did not set or mark), when the English scores of the participants were compared to those of March examination, it showed a significant increase in the percentages for all the participants, except two. The purpose of comparing the scores was to corroborate whether there was any difference in English subject and content subject results after the intervention, not suggesting that any changes are due solely to the intervention. Of the three scores that stand out, special mention needs to be made about the 27% increase, since this is the participant who has also shown the most substantial improvement on the Reading Strategy Transfer Test as well (see 5.9.2, Figure

7). On the other hand, the participant who had a negative difference on her score in the RSTT (see 5.9.2, Figure 7) also indicated a negative score (-1) on her English examination results in June compared to her score in March.

When I compare the participants' English scores after the strategy instruction intervention, I must agree with Anderson & Guthrie (1999:302) who is of the opinion that "when learners are taught reading strategies their understanding of the texts will improve".

## **5.10 ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTION: Reflecting on the intervention strategies**

The main research question of this study is as follows: How can a reading intervention programme contribute to the improvement of Gr.8 isiXhosa learners' reading comprehension in English?

As can be seen in my report on the data, the intervention can change the reading comprehension behaviour in some aspects, but not in others, as will be discussed next. Reflecting on the four implemented reading strategies (activating prior knowledge, monitoring reading, questioning and summarising) has been done in 5.6.2-5.6.4 and in the Concluding thoughts of Cycle 1, but it is necessary to link them directly to my research question.

Activating prior knowledge seemed to be the strategy that was the easiest to grasp by the participants, given the fact that on both occasions the participants could relate to the picture on the reading text, unlocking their prior knowledge. Even though they could monitor their reading by identifying the words they found difficult in the text, the participants were unable to infer the meaning of those words (see 5.6.2 and 5.8.2). The questioning strategy exposed the participants' inability to generate or answer Think & Search or On your Own questions. They seemed to confuse the two different question types (see examples of the questions at 5.6.3), but they quickly progressed in the use of Right There questions as evident in the tabulation of the questions (see 5.6.3). The lack of summarising skills strongly surfaced during implementation of the intervention in cycle 1.

What emerged from my reflection on the strategies implemented during the first cycle of Action Research is that monitoring, questioning and summarising needed to be refined and re-applied. With the words of Condy (2008:610) who states that "literacy achievement depends crucially on the nature and quality of instruction that learners receive in the

classroom”, in mind, I started the second cycle. Observations from the second cycle showed that the frequency of RSI had a positive effect on the participants’ application of the reading strategies. Positives from the second cycle could be observed in the improvement of their Think and Search questioning (see 5.8.3 for examples of the questions) as well as their summarising of text 2 (see 5.8.4 for examples of the participants’ summaries and Addendum M2 for the reading text). The participants’ use of dictionaries to infer the meaning of the words they identified while applying the Monitoring strategy is another improvement in reading strategy behaviour that emerged in cycle two and which improved reading comprehension. Besides improvement showed in questioning (Think & Search) and summarising, On your Own questions still seemed the strategy where the participants needed much more practice (see 5.8.3 for examples of the questions). After completion of the intervention I wanted to check whether strategy knowledge transfer had taken place (if any) during the implementation of the reading strategies, and in order to do so, I set a Reading Strategy Transfer Test (RSTT) to compare the measurements taken from the RST with those of the RSTT.

#### **5.10.1 Reading Strategy Transfer Test**

The RSTT tested the same measurements as the RST: *Supplying a title, Answering questions, Word meaning, Generating questions and Summarising* (see Addendum E). As mentioned above, the reason of the test was to capture the data from the RSTT for direct comparison between the participants’ strategy knowledge before (RST) and, after the research intervention (RSTT) had been implemented.

An in-depth discussion of the interpreted data of the RSTT and the comparative data between the RST and RSTT had been done in 5.9.1-5.9.2. Figure 7 displays the comparison between RST and RSTT measurement results for all the participants, while Figure 8 presents the individual comparative scores for RST and RSTT (5.9.2). Table 10 (5.9.2) is an illustration of the performance of each participant on the measured strategies (title, answering questions, generating questions, monitoring reading (word meaning) and summarising) both in the RST and RSTT, followed by a discussion of the results.

The question however is, did measurable strategy knowledge transfer occur after application of reading strategy instruction during the intervention? Analysis of the data obtained from the RST and RSTT show that strategy knowledge is measureable as depicted in the comparative scores as discussed in 5.9.2. One example of strategy

knowledge transfer is the measurement of Questioning, which shows the biggest increase in scores between the RST and RSTT (see 5.9.2, Figure 7), despite being the most difficult strategy to apply during the intervention. Asking and answering their own questions is a strategy that led to improved reading comprehension, at least for the majority of the learners.

### **5.10.2 Comparison of English examination results of research participants**

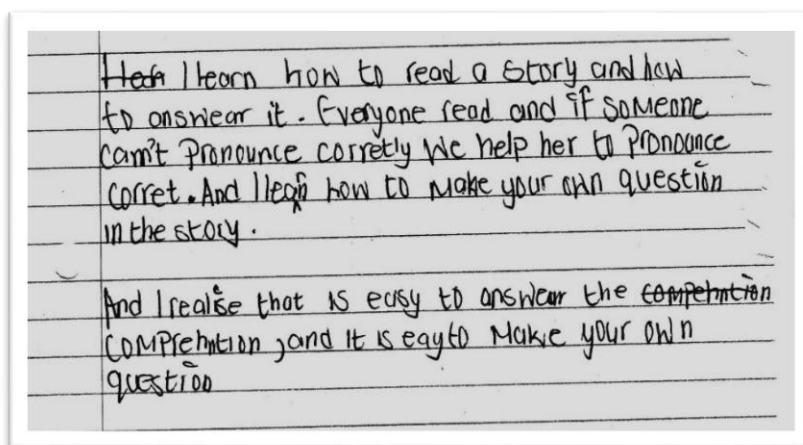
After the intervention, the participants' scores of their March and June English examination were compared. The purpose of comparing the scores was to corroborate whether there was any improvement in English subject and content subject results after the intervention. Such improvement may mean that the intervention resulted in improved reading comprehension, although this does not suggest that any improvements are due solely to the intervention. As displayed in 5.9.3, some of the participants showed substantial increases in their scores, while two of the participants' scores did not show an increase in percentage. When these scores are compared it must be highlighted that the English scores obtained by the participants during March were scores obtained by them in a test, while learners are usually scored on a more weighted examination in June. Therefore, the increased scores of the participants add more value to the effectiveness of reading strategy instruction, especially in view of furnishing teachers with "hard evidence" to encourage and motivate them to change their own comprehension instruction. In this regard, I have given teachers the proof that reading strategy instruction could lead to improvement of learners' comprehension, however, they should also take cognisance of the fact that instruction of strategies should be instructed over an extended period of time to have a more positive effect.

### **5.10.3 Reflective Journaling**

Asking the participants to reflect on the work we had done by writing about it in their journals, served as a "record of their thoughts and experiences" (Spalding & Wilson, 2002:1396). Not only was the purpose of this exercise to encourage the participants to express their feelings about the reading strategy instruction, it also created an opportunity to enhance their self-esteem, by documenting their experiences without fear as the example about questioning indicates below.



### Example of a participant's journal entry



More examples of the participants' journal entries are attached in Appendix G.

Below are some of the journal entries made by the participants which express how they felt while participating in the intervention:

"love the English class"

"beautiful"

"like"

"nice"

"happy"

"thank you for teaching us"

"enjoy"

"lovely"

These entries are fairly general and they create the impression that learners were writing for the teacher, rather than expressing their own ideas, problems and successes. However, it must be kept in mind that the learners struggle to write extended texts in English and their responses can be interpreted as an orientation to the classes that they attended. Purkey & Stanley (1991:68) suggest, teachers should establish and maintain a "warm, understanding, supportive climate in which learners feel comfortable and able to work productively". The above mentioned responses from the participants indicate that they felt supported and comfortable. Keeping a journal enabled me to reflect on what was happening throughout the study. It also helped me in the observations of the participants during the intervention and aided me in the reflection about my practice – journaling became a thinking tool whereby I could create "knowledge by the transformation of experience through observation and reflection" (Phelps, 2005:38).



## **5.11 CONCLUSION**

This chapter provided insight into the discussion of the interpretation and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data gathered for this research project. The different reading strategies that were used in the intervention, what transpired during the implementation of these strategies and the factors which influenced the instruction of these strategies were also discussed.

Correlations were drawn between the pre and post intervention tests, and examinations results of participants were compared. Analysis of quantitative data that was gathered has shown that the intervention lead to positive results and enhanced the strategy knowledge of the research participants. The knowledge transfer that took place during the intervention had a further positive effect as can be seen in the English examination of the participants. Conclusions were reached that reading strategy instruction is a valuable methodology that could lead to the enhancement of English additional language learners' reading comprehension skills.

With these positive thoughts in mind I end the chapter. What is left to do is to move on to the final chapter where the conclusions, recommendations and limitations of my research project will be discussed.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

Education has always been a great concern of any country, even more so in a country like South Africa: a melting pot of different races, cultures and languages, and seldom had any domain undergone so much change as education. Throughout the years South Africans became more aware of how poorly their children perform in literacy when compared with their peers in other countries- this was the problem that initiated my research project.

The foregoing chapters dealt with the theoretical framework (Chapter 1), provided an explanation of reading development from a historical perspective to the current reading situation in South Africa, dealt with reading in an additional language and the factors that influence English L2 readers and provided a theoretical synthesis for reading in an additional language (Chapter 2), based on Bandura's Socio-cognitive Theory (2001). In Chapter 3 I discussed several reading strategies, different reading activities and gave an interpretation of reading comprehension instruction. Chapter 4 discussed the research design and specifically explained Action Research as methodology and Chapter 5 dealt with the analysis and discussion of the quantitative and qualitative data gathered during the intervention.

The following will be discussed in the subsections that follow:

- the purpose of the study;
- general comments on the research project;
- factors that influence reading strategy instruction;
- factors that influenced reading instruction during the intervention;
- results and findings of the intervention;
- limitations of the study; and
- recommendations for further study.

#### 6.2 THE PURPOSE AND RESEARCH QUESTION OF THE STUDY

The intention of this subsection is to revisit the research question, "How can a reading intervention programme contribute to the improvement of Gr.8 isiXhosa learners' reading comprehension in English?", and to highlight the main aims and specific objectives of the study as set out below:

- The Baseline Test to identify the sample (see 4.4.1.1.2 and 5.3.1.1.1 for results).
- The Burt Word reading test to determine reading levels (see 4.4.1.2 and 5.3.1.1.2 for results of participants' Burt word reading age).

The main aim of the study was to design a reading strategy/ intervention(s) (see chapter 3.2.4- 3.3 for a framework of all the reading strategies and reading strategy instruction activities).

- Implement the reading strategy (strategies) by using reading strategy instruction (see chapter 5.5.1-5.5.4 and 5.8.1-5.8.4 for the implementation of activating prior knowledge, monitoring reading, questioning and summarising).

To reflect critically on the interventions in search of a better understanding of the educational problem (see 5.6.2-5.6.4 / 5.8.1-5.8.4 and in the Concluding thoughts of Cycle 1 (5.7).

- Implement a revised strategy (strategies) if needed (see 5.8.1-5.8.4 for the strategies administered in cycle two of the intervention).
- Implement a RSTT to capture the data for direct comparison between the participants' strategy knowledge before (RST) and, after the research intervention (RSTT) had been implemented (see 4.4.1.4 and 5.9.1-5.9.2 for results).
- Supply teachers with quantitative results to encourage a sustained change in their comprehension instruction (see *Figure 7* for a comparison between RST and RSTT measurement results for all the participants, *Figure 8* for their individual RST and RSTT scores and *Table 10* for their measured strategy knowledge transfer scores. Further quantitative results can be seen in the comparative English scores of their March and June examination in *Table 11*).

The following subsection will discuss the general comments of the research project followed by influenced description of how reading instruction improved isiXhosa learners' reading comprehension in English, as indicated by the results of the intervention as they relate to the goals mentioned above.

## 6.3 COMMENTS ON THE RESEARCH PROJECT

### 6.3.1 General Comments

Being an English Additional Language teacher at Sharky High, I became concerned about the learners' low literacy proficiency, not only in my subject (English First Additional Language) but whenever they had to deal with content texts in other subjects as well. Seeing learners struggling to comprehend English texts made me realise that I need to

investigate this occurrence which led to this research project. After discussing the benefits such project could have at Sharky High, I gained permission from the principal as well as the School Governing Body to conduct the research at the school. I knew that this would be an enormous undertaking, but I also realised that I could make a difference through my research. I knew that if my reading comprehension research would make an impact I had to start with Grade 8 learners and for that reason I selected Grade 8 isiXhosa learners to participate in my research (see section 4.4.1.1 for the sampling method). The reason for choosing isiXhosa learners was because these are the learners (from my own observation as language teacher) who struggle the most in comprehending English texts and given the opportunity, they might benefit from the research project.

For all parties involved in the research (the research subjects, their parents, the principal, my peers and me as the researcher) the project was a pilot study since this kind of study had not been done in the short history (three years) of the school.

Action Research (AR) was the chosen methodology to induce change through reading strategy instruction (RSI). An important advantage of AR, according to Van Daalen & Odendaal (2001:412), is that it “provides a scientific methodology for managing planned change”. Using action research as methodology gave me the opportunity to focus on the problem (isiXhosa learners’ inability to comprehend English text) trying to bring change by implementing reading strategies. Action research further allowed me to critically reflect on the implemented strategies and re-evaluated and re-implemented the strategies that needed more instructional time. In any undertaking things are not all smooth sailing and implementing change was no exception to the rule. Working with isiXhosa learners as my research subjects, who are “culturally and historically situated creatures” according to Swoyer (2008), I did not “overlook the laws of human nature” in the practising of AR (Heydenrych, 2001:6). Even though some limitations to the instruction of reading strategies during the intervention, as mentioned in 5.2.1 and 6.5, threatened the smooth running of the project, it was managed positively with the focus on educational change.

Using both qualitative and quantitative methods to gather data during the research project permitted me to combine the strengths of the two methods. In doing so, it allowed me to have a deeper insight into the research problem (why the isiXhosa learners cannot comprehend English text) and to use the methods to find out “what works” (Creswell, 2003:11). According to De Vos et al (2005: 359) using a mixed approach is associated with the “pragmatic paradigm” where the pragmatic approach “starts with the research question(s) (see 1.4) and then choosing the methods for answering them” (Punch,

2009:19). By applying a pragmatic research approach I agree with Creswell (2003:12) who defines pragmatic research as not obligating to one system of reality but one that agrees that research always occurs in social, historical, political and other contexts.

The challenges and limitations experienced during the research project will be discussed in the sub-sections that follow.

### **6.3.2 Factors that influence reading strategy instruction**

In general, reading strategy instruction is particularly appropriate to South African classrooms because the learners have diverse abilities, attitudes and interests towards reading. Not to mention that classes are filled to the brim. As an educator I am aware that teachers, in general and at the research school, are loaded with administrative duties, have to teach overcrowded classes and are hampered by inadequate resources that constrain them to effectively deliver quality education.

Gersten et al (1997:467), states that teachers will “accept and implement effective ways of teaching once they know what they are”. In other words, teachers are looking for proof in order to change their instructional practices. Therefore, the aim of my research project was to supply teachers with quantitative results from researched strategies as well as qualitative results to provide rich and layered data that would inform my own practice. Research done by Klapwijk (2011) on reading strategy instruction and teachers in a poorly resourced school in the Western Cape showed that the concept is not easily accepted by teachers and therefore needs a considerable mind shift.

Teachers, especially language teachers, are well aware of their learners’ lack of comprehension skills and although they want to remedy the situation, they are “not familiar with the required linguistic knowledge” to teach reading (Joshi et al. 2009: 606-607) and when teachers are not professionally prepared to deliver strategy instruction, they do “not understand the instruction or they are not committed to delivering the instruction” (Pressley, 2003:68). Reading instruction is not a once-off, quick fix application to solving learners’ reading comprehension problems, but requires continuous implementation in order to generate progress and results. Teachers therefore need to possess the knowledge *how* to teaching reading strategies and “*applying* such knowledge to construct meaning from the text” (Klapwijk, 2011: 218). From my experience as a teacher I am aware that a lack of structure and guidelines to implement any new concept in education can affect the goals set out to be achieved. For this research pre-selected reading

strategies and activities (3.2.4.1-3.2.4.5) were chosen and implemented through AR to increase the participants' knowledge of reading strategies that could lead to improving their comprehension of English texts (see 6.4 for results).

### **6.3.3 Factors that influenced strategy instruction during the intervention**

The main aim of this research study was to implement a reading strategy intervention through strategy instruction that would contribute to the improvement of Gr.8 isiXhosa learners' reading comprehension in English (see 1.4.1). The discussion below highlights the factors that influenced strategy instruction during the intervention. In the case of my research subjects, reading strategy instruction proved to be a challenge. The research subjects who are learners at Sharky High School, a low-SES school in a community where Afrikaans is the dominant language, could not fully be described as bilingual. Even though they have full command of isiXhosa, which is their dominant language, they do not have grade appropriate command of English or Afrikaans, both the languages of teaching and learning at the school. The fact that they come from homes where isiXhosa is the language of communication and contact with English is minimal to none at home had an effect on the participants' understanding of the content of the presented English reading texts during the intervention.

Besides the language barrier (mentioned above) the participants' low literacy levels add to their inability to engage in reading texts. Being unable to read the texts influence the participants' independent application of reading strategy instruction. When learners enter high school the general perception amongst teachers is that their learners can read, but as the measured word reading age of the participants showed a gap of up to six years lower than their real age (in 5.3.1.2), this is clearly not the case. The participants' inability to read is not solely to be blamed on the language barrier, but can also be traced back to a non-existing reading culture. A presentation on the topic, "*What do Western Cape teachers report about reading?*" was done by Peter Plüddemann on 8 November 2008 at the RASA Conference in Durban. The presentation revealed that a study done by PRAESA (University of Cape Town) on behalf of the Western Cape Education Department, found a lack of culture of reading amongst intermediate phase teachers' literacy practices (Plüddemann, 2008). If this trend continues it will have a serious effect on the reading ability of learners. To strengthen their reading skills, learners should have access to age-appropriate reading material of their own choice, read texts (fiction and non-fiction) every

day on their own, seeing that the 2.25hrs per two week cycle set aside for reading by CAPS (2011:7) are for formal text-based texts and not for reading pleasure.

Another factor that influenced strategy instruction was the participants' uptake of the concept of dealing with the different strategies while engaging in a text. For them, reading strategy instruction (activating prior knowledge, monitoring reading, questioning and summarising) was a new concept, which meant that the participants were used to teachers whose practices consist of reading the text aloud to the learners and then expecting the learners to answer the questions set on the content. However, this conception of the participants was deposed once they became more accustomed to the application of the different strategies and noticeable progress was evident (see 6.4 for results of the intervention strategies).

Doing research at a school is always subject to unforeseen conditions as we deal with "real life" situations (people) and Sharky High is no exception. Despite careful consideration of factors that might influence the smooth implementation of the intervention, absenteeism of participants as well as impromptu responsibilities as an educator sometimes had a negative impact on the intervention and compelled me to postpone the scheduled class until the next day or following week. Having discussed and reported what influenced strategy instruction it is time to turn our attention to the results of the intervention.

## **6.4 RESULTS AND FINDINGS OF THE INTERVENTION**

An intervention consisting of four reading strategies, e.g., Activating prior knowledge, Monitoring reading, Questioning and Summarising, were implemented to seven (7) isiXhosa learners over a period of four months during which qualitative data was gathered through observation (see 5.5.1-5.5.4 and 5.8.1-5.8.4) using two AR cycles. A reading strategy test (before the intervention) and reading strategy transfer test (after the intervention) were implemented to gather quantitative data for the research project. Chapter 5 discussed the results and analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data gathered during the intervention in detail. Results, in terms of application of reading strategy, by the participants as a group and individually are also discussed (see 5.9.1-5.9.2). In retrospect, the learners' use of reading strategies e.g., activating prior knowledge, monitoring reading, questioning and summarising applied during the intervention, revealed mixed successes.



Improvement in both the answering and formulating of questions relating to comprehension texts (see the results in this regard at 5.9.1) could be described as one of the successes of the intervention: learners reading comprehension could be shown to improve when they used these strategies. This is particularly pleasing since learners are continuously confronted by comprehension texts where they are required to answer questions relating to the texts. However, the same could not be said of the summary and word meaning skills of the participants when confronted by these strategies in the RST and RSTT (see 5.9.1). Summary writing, during the intervention at least, showed improvement, but having had to implement the strategy during the RSTT after the intervention, showed clear lack of summarising skills when dealing with unfamiliar texts (see results in the comparative scores at 5.9.1).

Monitoring reading can also be deemed as a success in terms of the intervention. Participants could satisfactorily identify difficult words in the texts which will undoubtedly improve their comprehension of English texts. By adding word meaning took monitoring a step further to test if the participants were able to give the meaning of the words they have identified. After being taught to use dictionaries as a tool to clarify the meaning, participants successfully implemented this strategy instruction during the intervention. The opposite had been revealed in the RSTT. When they were not allowed to use any dictionaries during the RSTT, a decrease of 7.1% in word meaning is recorded. The fact that the participants struggled to understand the meaning of question 6 on the RSTT, (see Addendum E) shows the need to have access to resources, for example dictionaries to clarify meanings they do not understand, even in test circumstances.

If the intervention is to be judged in terms of individual progress, I can undoubtedly state that it was a success by improving learners' reading comprehension in English. Three outstanding results (Poppy, Sunflower and Daffodil) are worth mentioning as the results of the Reading Strategy Transfer Test (RSTT) indicated (5.9.2). Besides having shown the best improved results on the RSTT, a remarkable fact is that these are the participants whose reading ages are the furthest below their real ages (see 5.3.1.1.2) compared to the rest of the participants in the intervention. Considering the above mentioned results, it showed that the poorest readers (according to the Burt Word reading test) benefited the most from strategy instruction; in fact, so did most of the participants. Some of the participants' comparative results did not show such a big improvement between their RST and RSTT as the above mentioned participants (see 5.9.2). A reason for the small score difference between their RST and RSTT does not mean that they did not benefit from the strategy instruction; in fact, from observations during the intervention, it was obvious that



these were the stronger readers with a smaller reading age difference (see their Burt Word reading age 5.3.1.1.2) who showed a quicker understanding of the reading strategies and who could apply the strategies faster than the poorer readers. Overall, the results of the RSTT indicate that the reading strategy research intervention had a positive effect on the participants' knowledge of measured strategies, which means that they can use these strategies to improve comprehension of English texts.

To provide measurable evidence of knowledge transfer to encourage teachers to change their instructional practices was one of the objectives of this study. In order to provide this evidence, two tests, the RST (before) and RSTT (after) the intervention were administered. After the data from the tests were analysed, it showed evidence of measurable strategy knowledge transfer that could be used to compare the participants' knowledge before and after the reading strategy instruction intervention. Even if measurable knowledge transfer does not automatically lead to improve comprehension, it is worthwhile to mention the observable increase in the participants' English examination results after implementation of the reading strategy instruction intervention (see 5.9.3). And even if the strategy knowledge transferred during the intervention cannot solely be credited with these increases in English examination results, it is possible to conclude that the continuous application of RSI may affect learners' comprehension ability positively.

As is clear from the developmental trajectory of the research participants, they are demonstrating "emergent interactive agency" (Bandura, 2001:13) as they attempt to use the strategies that I modelled (the social aspect of learning) while building on their own experiences to make meaning (the cognitive aspect of learning).

## **6.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The research study was conducted at one school with 7 isiXhosa-home language learners. Including a different home language group, maybe Afrikaans speaking learners, would have created the opportunity to collect valuable data for comparison, especially to what extent reading strategy instruction would influence Afrikaans speaking learners' strategy knowledge transfer in comparison to isiXhosa learners. Despite the fact that the school has an active library it lacks age-appropriate reading material that could kindle a desire for learners (including the research participants) with poor reading skills to visit the library and in doing so start a culture of reading.

Even though working with a small group of learners gave me an excellent opportunity to address their needs individually, the duration of the intervention (four months) could be viewed as a limitation. As improving isiXhosa learners' reading comprehension in English was the main aim of this study, an extended intervention could have proven to what extent reading strategy instruction could improve reading comprehension. Being a teacher-researcher could be viewed as a limitation. Besides teaching, a lot of administrative duties, meetings and extra-curricular activities are part of a teacher's responsibilities. As a researcher, I found these responsibilities to have impacted on the instructional time of the intervention.

## 6.6 RECOMMENDATIONS

This study attempted to improve reading comprehension at a township high school by means of an intervention and in the light of this aim the following recommendations logically flow from the research study:

- Conduct a reading test with all incoming Grade 8 learners in an attempt to establish their reading and word recognition level. This will firstly, enable teachers to identify poor readers and secondly, it is helpful in choosing appropriate reading texts based on the learners' reading ability.
- Conduct a comprehension baseline test in content learning areas to assess learners' reading comprehension skills. The data obtained from these tests will enable the teachers to implement strategies to improve learners' comprehension skills.
- Explicit reading and comprehension strategy instruction should be included in content learning areas and should be the task of all teachers concerned and not only the language teachers.
- Enforce the use of dictionaries to encourage not only effective vocabulary acquisition, but make the content more comprehensible for the learners.
- Explicit grammar instruction should be included that could improve writing skills.
- A reading programme should be implemented at the school to create a culture of reading among the learners.
- Furnish the school library with more age appropriate reading material and encourage the regular use of the library by all learners.

- Explicit comprehension instruction, which include reading strategy instruction, should be a prerequisite in teaching reading in schools and as part of the training programme of teachers in teacher training facilities.

## **6.7 POSSIBILITIES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

Since this small-scale study has shown success, the research intervention can be extended to include a whole grade group in the research school, particularly at grade 8 level. Alternatively, the research could include another home-language group for a comparative study or include other high schools from a community with a different SES status.

## **6.8 CONCLUSION**

In view of the low literacy competence of learners at Sharky High, this research was born to effect change in their reading comprehension through an intervention. Results of this study indicated that knowledge transfer of reading strategies is possible through reading strategy instruction and therefore could be applied to improve reading comprehension.

The research further proposed a set of reading strategies and activities that could act as a guideline and hopefully will persuade teachers to incorporate them into their own instructional practices to bring about change, because reading and comprehension cannot only happen in the English class, but need a determined effort from all teachers concerned. However, teaching reading strategies to improving reading comprehension, is not a once-off occurrence, but should be included in teachers' instructional practices in the longer term.

I conclude my research with a last insight: It has been an inspiring and rewarding journey and I hope that the contribution of my research would not only be an inspiration to my peers, but also have practical significance.

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## **Addendum A- Baseline Test**

### **GRADE 8**

### **COMPREHENSION TEST**

**INSTRUCTION:** Read the passage carefully and then answer ALL the questions.

#### **HIBERNATION**

Hibernation is one of the main adaptations that allow certain northern animals to survive long, cold winters. Hibernation is like a very deep sleep that allows animals to save their energy when there is little or no food available. The body functions of 'true hibernators' go through several changes while they are hibernating. Body temperature drops, and the heart rate slows. For example, a hibernating woodchuck's body temperature drops by more than 30 degrees Celsius, and its heart rate slows from 80 to 4 beats per minute! Other true hibernators include the jumping mouse, little brown bat, eastern chipmunk, and several ground squirrels.

Other animals, such as the skunk and raccoon, are not considered true hibernators, as they wake up in the winter to feed, and their body functions do not change as much. Since they only sleep for a little bit at a time, the term dormancy or 'light sleeping' is used to describe their behaviour. The largest animals to hibernate are bears. Their heart rate may slow down from a usual 40 –50 beats per minute to 8-12 beats per minute, but their body temperature changes very little, so they are able to wake up quickly.

Hibernating animals have a special substance in the blood called hibernation inducement trigger, or HIT. This substance becomes active in the fall, when the days become cooler and shorter. When HIT becomes active, the animals start preparing for winter. Some animals store food so that they can eat when they wake up, and some animals eat a lot in late summer and fall to add excess fat to their bodies. This fat keeps them warmer and acts as a source of energy while they are sleeping. Some animals also make changes to the places where they will sleep (dens). They add leaves and grasses to keep them warm.

## Addendum A 1- Baseline Test Questions

### Section A: Answer the questions

1. Why do animals hibernate?

---

2. What changes occur in the functions of an animal's body when it hibernates?

---

3. Why are raccoons and skunks not 'true hibernators'?

---

4. What is the term used to describe the behaviour of raccoons and skunks?

---

5. What does HIT stand for?

---

6. When does HIT become active?

---

7. How do animals prepare for hibernation?

---

---

---

### Section B: Fill in the missing words

8. During winter the animals go into a deep \_\_\_\_\_.

9. The animals save a lot of \_\_\_\_\_ when they hibernate.

10. Raccoons are \_\_\_\_\_ hibernators.

11. The word dormancy points to their \_\_\_\_\_.

12. The animals start preparing for hibernation in \_\_\_\_\_.

**Section C: Draw a circle around the word to which the underlined word refer to**

13. Some animals eat a lot in late summer and fall to add excess fat to their bodies.

more / less / a little

14. Hibernation allows certain northern animals to survive long, cold winters.

eating / sleeping / drinking

15. Hibernating animals have a special substance in the blood.

superior / inferior / poorer

**Section D: Give the meaning of the following words**

16. survive

---

17. behaviour

---

## Addendum B- Burt Word Reading Test

### Word list as read by the research participants

to	is	up	he	at
for	my	sun	one	of
big	some	his	or	an
went	boys	that	girl	water
just	day	wet	pot	things
no	told	love	now	sad
nurse	carry	quickly	village	scramble
journey	terror return	twisted	shelves	
beware	explorer	known	projecting	tongue
serious	domineer	obtain	belief luncheon	
emergency	events	steadiness	nourishment	fringe
formulate	scarcely	universal	commenced	overwhelmed
circumstances	destiny	urge	labourers	exhausted
trudging	refrigerator	melodrama	encyclopaedia	apprehend
motionless	ultimate	atmosphere	reputation	binocular
economy	theory	humanity	philosopher	contemptuous
autobiography	excessively	champagne	terminology	perambulating
efficiency	unique	perpetual	mercenary	glycerine
influential	atrocious	fatigue	exorbitant	physician
microscopical	contagion	renown	hypocritical	fallacious
phlegmatic	melancholy	palpable	eccentricity	constitutionally
alienate	phthisis	poignancy	ingratiating	subtlety

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THE BURT WORD READING TEST (1974 REVISION)

## Addendum C- Burt Word Reading Test Scoring Sheet

**Table: Conversion of 'raw score' to equivalent 'reading age' (norms)**

Locate the child's raw test score in the table below and read down to find their 'reading age'.

Reading ages are represented in years and months, separated by a point (.). For example, the notation 7.5 stands for 7 years 5 months, not 7 years 6 months.

<b>Test score</b>							<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>
Reading age							6.4	6.5	6.6	6.7
<b>Test score</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>40</b>
Reading age	6.8	6.9	6.10	6.10	6.11	7.0	7.1	7.1	7.2	7.3
<b>Test score</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>50</b>
Reading age	7.5	7.6	7.7	7.8	7.9	7.10	7.11	8.0	8.2	8.3
<b>Test score</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>60</b>
Reading age	8.4	8.5	8.6	8.7	8.9	8.10	8.11	9.0	9.1	9.2
<b>Test score</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>70</b>
Reading age	9.3	9.4	9.6	9.7	9.8	9.9	9.10	9.11	10.0	10.2
<b>Test score</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>80</b>
Reading age	10.3	10.4	10.5	10.6	10.7	10.9	10.10	10.11	11.0	11.1
<b>Test score</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>90</b>
Reading age	11.2	11.3	11.4	11.6	11.7	11.8	11.9	11.10	11.11	12.0

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## Addendum D- Reading Strategy Test

### What's Wild about African Wild Dogs? By: Catherine Clarke Fox



What's the difference between African wild dogs and the dogs we know as pets?

1. African wild dogs, which live in Africa, south of the Sahara desert, only have four toes, while domestic dogs and wolves have five. Wild dogs do not make good pets. They need to be out in the wild doing what they are supposed to be doing – ranging many miles every day and hunting to find the food they need to survive and feed pups.
2. They travel so far that researchers use radio collars to keep track of them. The collars send out radio signals that tell people where the dogs are. African wild dogs are a separate species from domestic dogs: *Lycaon pictus*, which means painted, wolf-like animal. No two wild dogs have the same pattern to their coats, so it is easy to tell them apart. Roaming through grasslands, savannas, and wooded areas, they hunt gazelles and other antelopes, baby wildebeests, warthogs, birds, and rats. Incredible hunters, they can run up to 35 miles per hour (56 kilometers per hour).
3. African wild dogs are smart and sociable, like pet dogs. They enjoy each other's company and live in packs of about six to 20 animals. Both males and females look out for young dogs and make sure they have food. African wild dogs talk to each other with two common types of calls. The 'hoo' call is a call that they make when lost or when a pack member is missing. It sounds almost like an owl. The twitter calls carry only very short distances, and are used to wake up the pack members and rally them to go hunting. They are very high pitched and sound almost like songbird calls.
4. There's one huge difference between domestic or pet dogs and African wild dogs. Millions of domestic dogs live on the planet, but there are probably fewer than 6,000 African wild dogs left. Lions and hyenas eat them, but most of all, African wild dogs are threatened by people. Humans hunt them, and ranchers and farmers who don't want them going after cows and sheep poison them. Humans are also destroying the wild, natural habitat they need to survive.

## Addendum D 1- Reading Strategy Test Questions

**Instruction:** Read the story. Use the information in the story to answer the questions below.

1. What is the title of the reading passage?

---

2. Where do these wild dogs live?

---

3. Do you think that wild dogs are good pets?

Quote a sentence from the reading text to support your answer.

---

4. Explain why wild dogs have to hunt every day.

---

5. Give another word for clever in the reading text. (paragraph 3)

---

6. Do you agree that people are a big threat to the wild dogs?

Give TWO reasons for your answer.

---

---

7. Write down TWO questions the teacher can ask you about wild dogs.

---

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8. Summarise paragraph 3 in your own words. (Write about 20 words).

---

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## **Addendum E- Reading Strategy Transfer Test**

1. When we are young, we learn that tigers and sharks are dangerous animals. We might be scared of them because they are big and powerful. As we get older, however, we learn that sometimes the most dangerous animals are also the smallest animals. In fact, the animal that kills the most people every year is one that you have probably killed many times: the mosquito.
2. While it may seem that all mosquitoes are biters, this is not actually the case. Male mosquitoes eat plant nectar. On the other hand, female mosquitoes feed on animal blood. They need this blood to live and produce eggs. When a female mosquito bites a human being, it transmits a small amount of saliva into the blood. This saliva may or may not contain a deadly disease. The result of the bite can be as minor as an itchy bump or as serious as death.
3. Because a mosquito can bite many people in the course of its life, it can carry diseases from one person to another very easily. Two of the most deadly diseases carried by mosquitoes are malaria and yellow fever. More than 700 million people become sick from these diseases every year. At least 2 million of these people will die from these diseases.
4. Many scientists are working on safer and better ways to kill mosquitoes, but so far, there is no sure way to protect everyone in the world from their deadly bites. Mosquito nets can be placed over beds to protect people against being bitten. These nets help people stay safe at night, but they do not kill any mosquitoes. Mosquitoes have many natural enemies like bats, birds, dragonflies, and certain kinds of fish. Bringing more of these animals into places where mosquitoes live might help to cut down the amount of mosquitoes in that area. This is a natural solution, but it does not always work very well. Mosquitoes can also be killed with poisons or sprays. Even though these sprays kill mosquitoes, they may also harm other plants or animals.
5. Although mosquitoes may not seem as scary as larger, more powerful animals, they are far more dangerous to human beings. But things are changing. It is highly likely that one day scientists will find a way to keep everyone safe from mosquitoes and the diseases they carry.

***Text taken from: Englishforeveryone.org***

## Reading Strategy Transfer Test questions

1. Underline all the words in the text that you don't understand.

2. Write your own title for the passage.

---

3. According to the text, which animal is the most dangerous to people?

Give a reason for your answer.

---

4. Why do the mosquitoes need blood?

---

5. Give the names of any TWO enemies that mosquitoes have.

---

6. Name the TWO deadly diseases that mosquitoes carry from one person to another.

---

7. Write down:

7.1 Right There question

---

7.2 Think and Search question

---

7.3 On Your Own question

---

8. Summarise paragraph 2 in your own words. ( about 6 lines)

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## Addendum F- Questionnaire

### Learner Questionnaire

(researcher-developed questionnaire)

**Instruction:** Read carefully and complete all the questions.

#### **Part 1: General questions**

1. How old are you? Write the number: \_\_\_\_\_
2. How many siblings (brothers and sisters) do you have? Tick the correct number.

<b>brothers</b>	<b>sisters</b>
one	one
two	two
three	three
four	four
five	five
none	none

3. Do you have an older sister or brother at **this** school? Yes or No. \_\_\_\_\_
4. If the answer is YES, in which grade is he/she? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Who do you live with? Circle the correct number.
  1. both my parents
  2. my mother only
  3. my father only
  4. my grandparents
  5. my aunt
  6. alone
  7. other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
6. Is your family originally from Gansbaai? Yes/ No \_\_\_\_\_
7. If No, please specify where they are from. \_\_\_\_\_

## **Part 2: Home questions**

- Do you have a TV at home? Yes, I do. / No, I don't. \_\_\_\_\_
- If you have one, how often do you watch TV? Check the appropriate box.

Always	Sometimes	Hardly	Never
--------	-----------	--------	-------

- If you watch TV, which programme is your favourite? Check the box.

Generations	
7de Laan	
soccer	
rugby	
Isidingo	
church services	
movies	

- Do you have your own bedroom at home? Yes / No \_\_\_\_\_
- How often do you listen to English songs? Circle the one you prefer.  
A. Always      B. Sometimes      C. Never
- Which of the following **English** books do you have at home? Check the box(es)

magazines ☐ novels ☐ comic books ☐ newspapers ☐ e ☐

- How do you feel about reading? Check the box.

I love reading	I like reading	I don't read	I dislike reading
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- In what language do you communicate at home? Check the box.

Xhosa ☐ Xhosa and English ☐ English ☐ Afrikaans ☐

Afrikaans and Xhosa ☐ Other ☐ (Specify which language) \_\_\_\_\_

## **Part 3: School questions**

- Were you excited to come to Gansbaai Academia? Yes/ No \_\_\_\_\_
- Do you attend school every day? Yes/ No \_\_\_\_\_
- How many of your primary school friends are also at **this** school? Tick the box.

Only 1	1+	5+	10+	The whole class	No friends
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. How often do you speak English to your friends when you outside the classroom?

always	never	sometimes

5. Which language do you feel more comfortable with in the classroom? Circle the one you prefer.                      XHOSA                      ENGLISH

6. Which of the following is TRUE for you when you read something in English?

I understand everything I read	I understand just a little bit of what I read	I don't understand what I read	I struggle with some words	I don't want to read in English

7. How often do you understand instructions given to you in English? Check the box.

I always understand	I sometimes understand	I never understand

8. Is it easy for you to understand the teachers who do not speak Xhosa when they teach you? Circle the answer you want.

A. Yes                      B. No

9. Do you enjoy being taught your school subjects in English? Yes/ No \_\_\_\_\_

10. How well did you do in English at primary school? Check the box.

Excellently	Well enough	So-so	Not good at all

11. What of the following do you do in your free time? You can circle more than one.

1. Play games outside with friends
2. Read
3. Watch TV
4. Sleep
5. Study

## Addendum G- Journal entries of participants

<p>I learn how to read story and make quotations and the words you don't understand and check in a dictionary or ask someone who know these words you don't understand And now I <sup>know</sup> what different <sup>between</sup> wild dogs and pet dogs and now I know that words that I did know</p> <p>And I feel happy that I know how to do quotations when you read a story and I feel happy when I must look the answers</p>	<p>I learn how to read story and make questions and the words you don't understand and check in a dictionary or ask someone who know these words you don't understand And now I know what different between wild dogs and pet dogs and now I know that words that I did know</p> <p>And I feel happy that I know how to do questions when you read a story and when I must look the answers.</p>
<p><u>How was your day feeling today?</u></p> <p>My day is was nice and it was beautiful and I love engli class at after school and the story about the wild Dog it was beautiful and I like it we ask the teacher those word we don't understand in this title of the story and she explain for us and I now I understand what the name mining and we had fun and we ask the question in the story and all of us we answered and I feel happy for that day.</p> <p><u>How do you read today?</u></p> <p>I read beautiful and the word I don't understand I ask to the teacher and teacher explain for me and I like to read and I like the story and I feel happy that I know to read and how to said word And I say to all those teacher that they teach me the english thank you.</p>	<p><u>How was your feeling today?</u></p> <p>My day is nice and it was beautiful and I love engli class at after school and the story about the wild Dog it was beautiful and I like it we ask the teacher those word we don't understand in this title of the story and she explain for us and I now I understand what the name mining and we had fun and we ask the question in the story and all of us we answered and I feel happy for that day.</p> <p><u>2. How do you read today?</u></p> <p>I read beautiful and the word I don't understand I ask to the teacher and teacher explain for me and I like to read and I like the story and I feel happy that I know to read and how to said word and I say to all those teacher that they teach me the English thank you.</p>



## Addendum H1- Learners' Work

Sample learners' summaries from Text 1 and 2 (Refer Addendums M1 & M2)

## WILD DOGS

African wild dog live in Africa, south of the Sahara.  
The wild dog are not make a good pets Because  
they must hunt everyday.

The researchers use collars to track them because they travel so far to hunt

The wild dogs are smart and ~~so~~ sociable. They can talk to each but not ~~as~~ people talk.

There is the huge different between domestic or Pet dog. With wild dogs. There is only fewer wild dogs left because the people threatened them and the farmer they poison them.

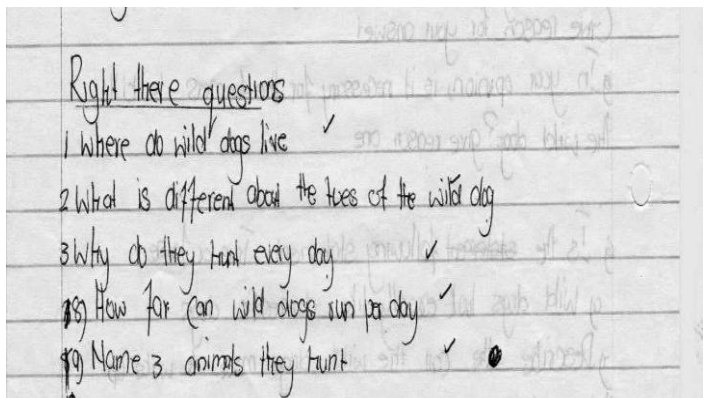
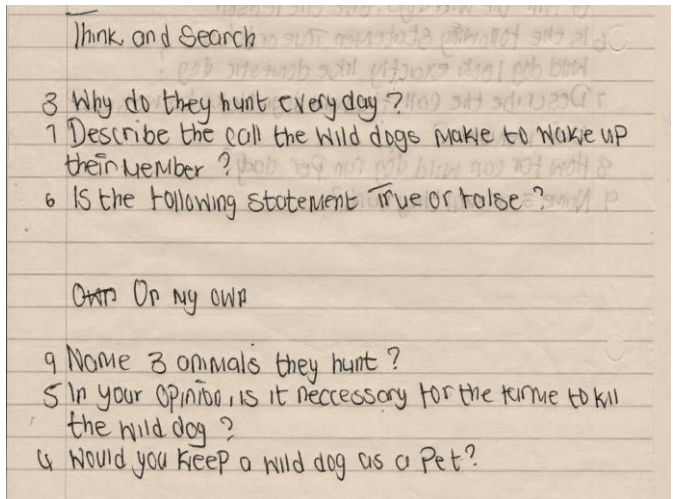
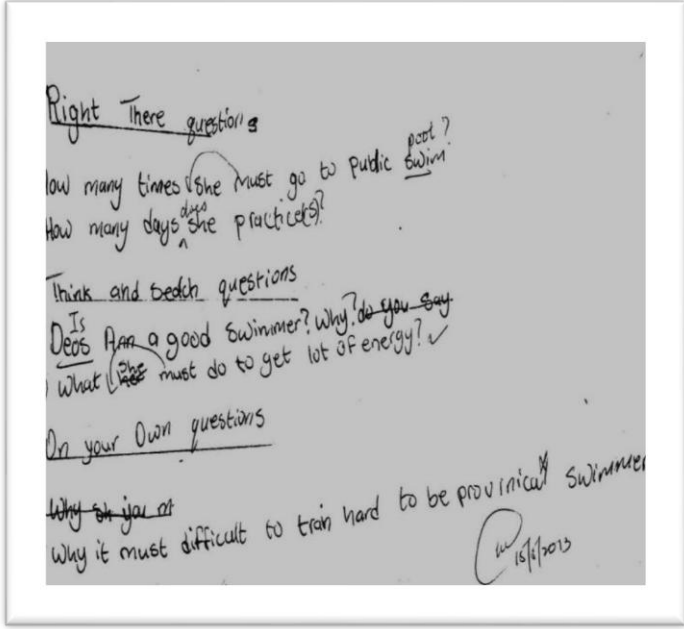
# ANN

Ann is a good swimmer. She does well in school swimming events. Ann wants to ~~swimmer~~ <sup>swim</sup> to <sup>in the</sup> provincial team. She has not choose <sup>been</sup> (to) ~~successful~~ but she is very hopeful. Ann practices everyday in a week that means she must wake up early so that she can swim in a school pool before classes start. And ~~for~~ <sup>three</sup> (times) afternoons a week she goes to a public pool. Ann found that she must <sup>be</sup> ~~going~~ <sup>be</sup> and disciplined. The swimmer must eat healthily food and get enough sleep. Ann wants to be a coach or personal trainer one day.

*M. J. J. J.*

## Addendum H2-Sample of learners' questioning for Text 1 and 2

### (Refer Addendums M1 & M2)

 <p>Right there questions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Where do wild dogs live ✓</li> <li>2 What is different about the toes of the wild dog</li> <li>3 Why do they hunt every day ✓</li> <li>4 How far can wild dogs run per day ✓</li> <li>5 Name 3 animals they hunt ✓</li> </ol>	<p><b>Right There Questions –TEXT 1</b></p> <p>Where do wild dogs live?</p> <p>What is different about the toes of the wild dog?</p> <p>How far can wild dogs run per day?</p> <p>Name 3 animals they hunt.</p>
 <p>Think and Search</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3 Why do they hunt every day?</li> <li>1 Describe the call the wild dogs make to wake up their member?</li> <li>6 Is the following statement true or false?</li> </ol> <p>On my own</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9 Name 3 animals they hunt?</li> <li>5 In your opinion, is it necessary for the farmer to kill the wild dog?</li> <li>4 Would you keep a wild dog as a pet?</li> </ol>	<p><b>Think &amp; Search Questions-TEXT 1</b></p> <p>Describe the call the wild dogs make to wake up their member.</p> <p>Why do they hunt every day?</p> <p><b>On my Own Questions- TEXT 1</b></p> <p>In your opinion is it necessary for the farmer to kill the wild dog?</p> <p>Would you keep a wild dog as a pet?</p>
 <p>Right There questions</p> <p>How many times must she go to public pool?</p> <p>How many days does she practice?</p> <p>Think and Search questions</p> <p>Is Ann a good swimmer? Why do you say?</p> <p>What must she do to get a lot of energy?</p> <p>On your Own questions</p> <p>Why is it difficult to train hard to be provincial swimmer?</p> <p>15/6/2013</p>	<p><b>Right There Questions</b></p> <p>How many times must she go to the public pool?</p> <p>How many days does she practice?</p> <p><b>Think &amp; Search Questions</b></p> <p>Is Ann a good swimmer?</p> <p>What must she do to get a lot of energy?</p> <p><b>On your Own Questions</b></p> <p>Why is it difficult to train hard to be a provincial swimmer?</p>

## Addendum I- WCED Permission for Research



Directorate: Research

[Audrey.wyngaard2@pgwc.gov.za](mailto:Audrey.wyngaard2@pgwc.gov.za)

tel: +27 021 467 9272

Fax: 0865902282

Private Bag x9114, Cape Town, 8000

[wced.wcape.gov.za](http://wced.wcape.gov.za)

**REFERENCE:** 20110919-0079

**ENQUIRIES:** Dr A T Wyngaard

Mrs Mona Matthews  
Baleana Bay Apartments No 3  
C/o Dirkie Uys and Fabrieksweg  
Gansbaai  
7220

**Dear Mrs Mona Matthews**

### **RESEARCH PROPOSAL: XHOSA LEARNERS' READING COMPREHENSION IN ENGLISH FIRST ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE: A READING INTERVENTION AT A TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL**

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Approval for projects should be conveyed to the District Director of the schools where the project will be conducted.
5. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
6. The Study is to be conducted from **04 February 2013 till 30 June 2013**
7. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr A.T Wyngaard at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number?
9. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
10. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
11. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
12. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:

**The Director: Research Services  
Western Cape Education Department  
Private Bag X9114  
CAPE TOWN  
8000**

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.

Signed: Dr Audrey T Wyngaard

for: **HEAD: EDUCATION**

**DATE: 29 January 2013**

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Lower Parliament Street, Cape Town, 8001  
tel: +27 21 467 9272 fax: 0865902282  
Safe Schools: 0800 45 46 47

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Private Bag X9114, Cape Town, 8000  
Employment and salary enquiries: 0861 92 33 22  
[www.westerncape.gov.za](http://www.westerncape.gov.za)

## Addendum J- Stellenbosch University Ethical Clearance for Research



UNIVERSITEIT•STELLENBOSCH•UNIVERSITY  
jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

### Approved with Stipulations Response to Modifications- (New Application)

23-Apr-2013  
BAATJES, Mona Magda

Protocol #: HS904/2013

Title: Xhosa-speaking learners reading comprehension in English First Additional Language: A reading intervention at a township high school.

Dear Ms Mona BAATJES,

The Response to Modifications - (*New Application*) received on , was reviewed by members of Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities) via Expedited review procedures on 19-Apr-2013.

Please note the following information about your approved research protocol:

Protocol Approval Period: 23-Apr-2013 - 22-Apr-2014

The Stipulations of your ethics approval are as follows:

**1.Consent forms:**

The Assent form provides an option to the learners to contact Ms Fortuin. Clarify who is this person.  
The Consent forms only refer to the researcher and Prof van der Walt.

**2.Permission letter:**

Please submit the original letter from Gansbaai Academia

**Standard provisions**

1. The researcher will remain within the procedures and protocols indicated in the proposal, particularly in terms of any undertakings made in terms of the confidentiality of the information gathered.
2. The research will again be submitted for ethical clearance if there is any substantial departure from the existing proposal.
3. The researcher will remain within the parameters of any applicable national legislation, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of research.
4. The researcher will consider and implement the foregoing suggestions to lower the ethical risk associated with the research.

You may commence with your research with strict adherence to the abovementioned provisions and stipulations.

Please remember to use your **protocol number** (HS904/2013) on any documents or correspondence with the REC concerning your research protocol.

Please note that the REC has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

**After Ethical Review:**

Please note that a progress report should be submitted to the Committee before the approval period has expired if a continuation is required.  
The Committee will then consider the continuation of the project for a further year (if necessary). Annually a number of projects may be selected randomly for an external audit.

National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC) number REC-050411-032.

This committee abides by the ethical norms and principles for research, established by the Declaration of Helsinki, the South African Medical Research Council Guidelines as well as the Guidelines for Ethical Research: Principles Structures and Processes 2004 (Department of Health).

**Provincial and City of Cape Town Approval**

Please note that for research at a primary or secondary healthcare facility permission must be obtained from the relevant authorities (Western Cape Department of Health and/or City Health) to conduct the research as stated in the protocol. Contact persons are Ms Claudette Abrahams at Western Cape Department of Health ([healthres@pgwc.gov.za](mailto:healthres@pgwc.gov.za) Tel: +27 21 483 9907) and Dr Helene Visser at City Health ([Helene.Visser@capetown.gov.za](mailto:Helene.Visser@capetown.gov.za) Tel: +27 21 400 3981). Research that will be conducted at any tertiary academic institution requires approval from the relevant parties. For approvals from the Western Cape Education Department, contact Dr AT Wyngaard ([awyngaard@pgwc.gov.za](mailto:awyngaard@pgwc.gov.za), Tel: 0214769272, Fax: 0865902282, <http://wced.wcape.gov.za>).

Institutional permission from academic institutions for students, staff & alumni. This institutional permission should be obtained before submitting an application for ethics clearance to the REC.

Please note that informed consent from participants can only be obtained after ethics approval has been granted. It is your responsibility as researcher to keep signed informed consent forms for inspection for the duration of the research.

We wish you the best as you conduct your research.

If you have any questions or need further help, please contact the REC office at 0218089183.

**Included Documents:**

REC Application

Permission letter

Research proposal

DESC form

Consent forms

Sincerely,

Susara Oberholzer

REC Coordinator

Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities)

## Addendum K1- Informed Consent Form for Parents

### Informed Consent Form for parent

#### STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

#### CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

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##### Consent form for parents

*Xhosa-speaking learners' reading comprehension in English First Additional Language: A reading intervention at a township high school.*

Your child has been selected to participate in a research study conducted by Mona Matthews (BEd.Hons) through Stellenbosch University. This study has been approved by the Western Cape Education Department and your child's school. The results of the research will contribute to a MEd dissertation. Your child was selected as a possible participant in this study because your school provides instruction in a language that is not always all learners' first (home) language.

#### 1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to invent and implement a reading intervention to help isiXhosa learners improve their reading comprehension in English.

#### 2. PROCEDURES

If your child volunteers to participate in this study, we would ask him/her to:

- do a reading test to determine what is the reading age and reading level of your child;
- answer questions on a questionnaire to learn more about his/her background;
- have a one-on-one interview with the researcher;
- be interviewed in a group;
- write a comprehension test before the implementation of the intervention strategies to determine the areas he/she is struggling with;
- participate in the intervention classes and be observed in these classes;
- write down his/her experiences in a reflective journal;
- write a final test at the end of the intervention to determine if there is any improvement in the areas he/she was struggling with before the intervention strategies were implemented; and
- be aware that his/her March and June English examination results will be used for comparison to determine if the scores have improved.

All the research activities and tests will take place at your child's school and will be administered by the researcher, who is currently a teacher at the research school. These tests are only to obtain information about his/her level of understanding of the texts and which intervention strategies the researcher could use to help your child to improve his/her understanding of English texts.



### **3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

This study does not entail any risks, discomforts or inconveniences. All tests are similar to reading and writing tasks performed in school every day. All observation visits and interactions with the learners will be done by prior appointment with and permission from the school principal. There will be no disruptions of normal class activities.

### **4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND / OR TO SOCIETY**

The potential benefits of the research for the learners are as follows:

- Gaining knowledge of a variety of reading strategies for improving reading comprehension.
- The potential to apply the reading strategies to other content learning areas.
- Improving their overall English scores in tests and examinations.

### **5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION**

No payment will be made for participation in this study.

### **6. CONFIDENTIALITY**

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential and only be available to the researcher. Confidentiality will be maintained by storing all information in a secure place, whether in hard-copy or electronic format. In the final dissertation and any report intended for publication, generic descriptors for persons (teachers and learners) and organizations (schools) will be used to ensure anonymity. The researcher and her direct supervisor are the only persons who will have access to all information. Information will not be released to any party unless they have a legal right to it.

### **7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

You can choose whether your child participates in this study or not. If you agree to your child's participation in this study, you may withdraw your child at any time without consequences of any kind. Your child may also refuse to answer any questions they don't want to answer and still remain in this study. The investigator may withdraw your child from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

### **8. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS**

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Mona Matthews (the researcher) by phone at 0791914042 or personal visit at Gansbaai Academia. Alternatively her supervisor, Prof C. van der Walt, can be contacted at (021) 808 2284.

### **9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS**

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue your child's participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your child's

participation in this research study. If you have any questions regarding your child's rights as a research subject, contact Malene Fouche by phone at 021- 808 4622.

**SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE**

I declare that I understand the information described above, and have been given the opportunity to question the researcher and/ or principal about the information described above in the language of my choice (English or Xhosa). Any questions that I had have been answered to my satisfaction.

I hereby consent to my child's participation in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

---

Name of Child (Subject/ Participant)

---

Name of Legal Representative (Parent/ Guardian)

---

Signature of Legal Representative (Parent/ Guardian)

---

Date

**SIGNATURE OF RESEARCHER**

I declare that I gave the participant's parent/ guardian the opportunity and time to ask me any questions pertaining to this study. I also explained the information in this document to \_\_\_\_\_ (school principal. He was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in Afrikaans.

---

Signature of Researcher

---

Date



## **Addendum K 2- Informed Consent Form for Parents (isiXhosa)**

### **IFOMU YESIVUMELWANO NOMFUNDI**

Abafundi belwimi lwesixhosa befunda isicatshulwa esibhalwe ngolwimi lwesingesi.

Umntwana wakho uchongiwe ukuba athathe inxaxheba kuphando lwezifundo. Oluzakube lusenziwa ngutitshalakazi u Mona Matthews elwenza ne Dyunivesiti yase Stellenbosch. Olu phando luphunyeziwe lisebe lezemfundo lwase Ntshona koloni kunge Nesikolo Somntwana Gansbaai Academia.

#### **1. INJONGIO YOLUPHANDO**

Kukunceda abafundi bolwimi lwesiXhosa ukuba bakwazi ukufunda izicatshulwa ezibhalwe ngolwimi olungelolabo isingesi

#### **2. IINKQUBO**

Ukuba umntwana wakho uyazinikela ekuthatheni inxaxheba kolu fundo

- Yenza uvavanyo lokufunda ukuze ubone ukuba yeyiphi iminyaka yokufunda nenqanaba akulo umntwana wakho.
- Phendula imibuzo ebuziweyo ukwenzela wazi ngokubanzi ngemvelaphi yakhe.
- Yiba nodlinwano-ndlebe ngamaqela.
- Bhala uvavanyo lwesicatshulwa phambi kokumiliselwa kohlolo kwaziwe izifundo ezikusokolisayo.
- Thabatha inxaxheba kuhlolo lwase- klasini uphantsi kweliso elibukhali.
- Bhala phantsi ngolwazi analo (kwincwadana).
- Bhala uvavanyo lokugqibela ekupheleni kohlolo, ukubona ukuba ikhona inkqubela phambili na kwizifundo ebezimsokolisa phambi kohlolo.
- Kufuneka uyazi ukuba imviwo zika- March no- June zesingesi iziphumo zazo zisetyenziswe ukudityaniswa zibonwe ukuba amanqaku anyukile na.

Zonke izinto ezidibene nophando

### 3. **Ubungozi**

Oluphando alunabungozi bunalo. Zonke izinto abazibhalayo ziznto ezi baqhele ukuzibhala esikolweni umhla wonke.

### 4. **Inzuzo kwizifundo**

- Bazakufumana ulwazi lokuphawula ukufundwa kwesicatshulwa sesingesi.
- Olulwazi bakwazi ukulisebenzisa nakwezinye izifundo zabo.
- Baphucule namanqaku abo kuvavanyo lwelwimi lwesingesi.

### 5. **Intlawulo**

Akukho ntlawulo ifumanekayo xa uthe wathatha inxaxheba kolu phando.

### 6. **Ukuthatha inxaxheba nokuyirhoxisa**

Uvumelekile ukuba uvume okanye ungavumi ngomntwana wakho. Kwaye unalo nelungelo lokuba umrhoxise umntwana wakho nokuba ubusevumile nomntwana. Unalo ilungelo lokuba angaphenduli xa ethe waziva engafuni ukuphendula. Awuzokohlwaywa xa uthe warhixisa umntwana wakho. Ukuba kukho imiba ongayiqondiyo ungaqakamishelkana noTitshalakazi uMona Matthews kwezi nombolo 0791914042. Okanye uze apha esikolweni Gansbaai Academia. Okanye uqakamishelane nomphathi wakhe uProf C. van der Walt kwezi nombolo (021)8082284.

Siyacela ukuba utyikitye ukuba uyavuma ukuba umntwana wakho athathe inxaxheba.

Igama lomntwana othatha inxaxheba

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Ingama lomzali omelet umntwana

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Utyikityo lomzali womntwana

## Addendum L 1- Participant Information Leaflet and Assent Form



### PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LEAFLET AND ASSENT FORM



#### TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT:

Xhosa-speaking learners' reading comprehension in English First Additional Language: A reading intervention at a township high school.

**RESEARCHERS NAME(S):** Me. Mona Matthews

**ADDRESS:** 7 Baleana Bay, Dirkie Uys Street, Gansbaai 7220

**CONTACT NUMBER:** 0791914042

#### What is RESEARCH?

Research is something we do to find new knowledge about the way things (and people) work. We use research projects or studies to help us find out more about disease or illness. Research also helps us to find better ways of helping, or treating children who are sick.

#### What is this research project all about?

At our school we have learners who cannot read with comprehension: In other words the learners do not understand what they read and therefore they cannot answer the questions about their reading. That is why I have decided to help these learners by teaching them how to read properly and answer the questions correctly.

### **Why have I been invited to take part in this research project?**

You have been invited to take part in this research project because you need help to understand what you have read in English and also to be able to answer the questions that are being asked.

### **Who is doing the research?**

My name is Mona Matthews and I am an English teacher at the school. I am doing this study because I have seen that most of our learners do not read with comprehension and I have realised that I have to do something to help them.

What will happen to me in this study?

As a participant in this study, there are certain things you will have to do in order for me to help you excel in English.

- Firstly, you will have to read words in English. When you do that, I will be able to find the correct reading level for you.
- Secondly, you will have to write a test where you will have to read and answer comprehension questions. This will help me to determine exactly what the problems are you struggling with.
- After I have determined what the problems are, we can use different strategies (activities) to help you to solve those problems that you are struggling with.
- After we have done the different strategies, you will write another test to find out if your comprehension had improved.
- You will have to answer questions on a questionnaire that I will give to you. Your answers will help me to understand a little more about your background.
- During the study I will have an interview with you to give you a chance to talk about your feelings and your experiences taking part in this study.
- You will also have to be interviewed as part of the focus group.
- You need to write down all your experiences during the study in a journal.
- Lastly, you must be aware that I will use the examination results of your March test and compare it with the results of your June examination to find out if there is any improvement in your English scores.

### Can anything bad happen to me?

During the study nothing bad can happen to you. You are under my supervision and I will see to it that you are not harmed in any way.

### Can anything good happen to me?

Yes. You have a lot to gain from this study. You will learn to improve your reading and your understanding of the texts you read in English. As a result, your English tests and examination marks might also improve.

### Will anyone know I am in the study?

Besides your parents, the study professor and me, nobody else will know that you are participating in this study. In other words, your participation will be kept confidential.



### Who can I talk to about the study?

If you have any questions you want to ask or any problems that you experience you can contact:

Me. Carien Fortuin at 0737269622

Or you can contact me: (M. Matthews) at 0791914042

### What if I do not want to do this?

If you do not want to be in the study anymore, you are free to stop without getting into any trouble. Even if your parents gave their permission that you may participate, you can stop participating in the study at any stage.

Do you understand this research study and are you willing to take part in:

Check the box.

1. The Reading Test

YES	NO
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Writing two comprehension tests

YES	NO
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Taking part in the intervention

YES	NO
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Answer questions on the questionnaire

YES	NO
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Being interviewed individually

YES	NO
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. Being interviewed in a group

YES	NO
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Has the researcher answered all your questions?

YES	NO
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Do you understand that you can pull out of the study at any time?

YES	NO
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Child

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Addendum L 2 – Participant Information Leaflet and Assent Form (isiXhosa)



### Isihloko Sophando

Abafundi abantetho isisiXhosa abafunda isicatshulwa ngolwimi olongezelelweyo lwesingesi: Ukuncedisa ngokufunda kwisikolo sika wonke-wonke.

IGAMA: Me. Mona Mathews

IDILESI: 7 Baleana Bay, Dirkie Uys Street, Gansbaai 7220

INOMBOLO YOMNXEBA: 0791914042

### Yintoni Uphando?

Uphando yinto ethi siyenze ukufumana ulwazi ngokusebenza kwento ethile. Senza uphando

Ukuze sifumane ulwazi kabanzi ngezipolo ezithile. Uphando lukwasinceda ekufumaneni

lindlela ezingcono zokunyanga abantwana xa begula.

### Lungantoni oluphando?

Esikolweni sethu sinabantwana abangakwaziyo ukufunda ngokuqonda. Into ethetha ukuba

Abakuqondi oko bakufundayo nto leyo eyenza bangakwazi ukuphendula imibuzo.

Ndothi ndibancedise bakwazi ukufunda nokuphendula imibuzo ebuziweyo.

### Ndimenywe njani koluphando?

Umenyiwe ukuba uthathe inxaxheba koluphando ukwenzela ze uncedwe ekufundeni

Nasekuphenduleni imibuzo ebhekisele koko uthe wakufunda kwisiNgesi.

### **Ngubani lo wenza uphando?**

Igama lam ndingu-Mona Matthews ndingu titshala wesingesi apha esikolweni.

Ndenza esi sifundo ngoba ndibone uninzi lwabafundi bethu bengafundi ngendlela eyiyo ndacinga ukuba mandenze/ndizame ukubanceda.

### **Kuzakwenzeka ntoni kum kwesisifundo?**

Xa ungumthathi nxaxheba kwesi sifundo kukho izinto ezithile ekufuneka uzenzile ukwenzela Ukuba mna ndikwazi ukukunceda ugqwese kwisifundo sesi-Ngesi

- Okokuqala ,kufuneka ufunde amagama ngesi-Ngesi.Xa wenze oko,ndizakufumana indlel elungileyo yomgangatho wakho wokufunda.
- Okwesibini,kufuneka ubhale uvavanyo apho kuzaku kuzakufuneka ufundike isicathshulwa uphendule imibuzo engesisicatshulwa. Lo nto izakunceda mna ndikwazi ukubona ingxaki yakho ukuba ubufumanaphi ubunzima
- Emva kokuba ufumanisile ukuba ziintoni iingxaki zakho, ndingenza izinto ezinintsi ezinokunceda ukwazi usombhulule ezingxaki ubethakala kuzo.
- Emva kokuba sense ezindlela zohlukileyo zokunceda uza ubhale olunye uvavanyo ukwenzela sibone ukuba isicatshulwa sakho siphucukile.
- Kuze kufuneka uphendule imibuzo ebuziweyo endizakunika yona. Iimpendulo zakho zizakunceda ukuba ndazi kancinci ngemvelaphi yakho.
- Ngelixesha uzawube usenza isifundo, ndizakukhe ndenze udliwo-ndlibe kunye nawe ndikunike ithuba lokuba uziva njani nezinto ozifundileyo ngokukhuthatha inxaxheba kwesisifundo
- Kufuneka kwakhona wenziwe udlwano ndlebe kuba ulilungu leqela.
- Kufuneka ubhale phantsi zonke izinto oye wazifumana ngeli-xesha wenza esi sifundo kwincwadana yakho encinane



- Okokugqibela, kuzokufuneka uyazi ukuba ndizakusebenza iziphumo zakho zika-Matshi ndizithelekise nezika-Juni kuba ndifuna ukubona ukuba ikhona na inkqubela phambili kumanqaku esi-Ngesi.

### **Kungenzeka into embi kum?**

Xa usenza esi sifundo akukho nto imbi inokwenzeka kuwe. Uphantsi kweliso lam elibukhali kwaye ndizakwenza ngako konke ndikukhusele kungabikho nto izakulimaza endleleni yakho.

### **Kungenzeka into elungileyo kum?**

Ewe. Ungazuza lukhulu kwesi sifundo. Uzakuphucula indlela ofunda ngayo nendlela osiva ngayo isifundo sesi-Ngesi. Uvavanyo lwakho kunye namanqaku esi-Ngesi ezakutsho aphucuke.

### **Ingaba ukhona umntu ozakundazi ukuba ndenza esi isifundo?**

Ngaphandle komzali wakho, ingcali yesifundo kunye nam akukho mntu uzakuyazi ukuba

Uthatha inxaxheba kwesi sifundo, ngamanye amazwi inxaxheba yakho izakugcinwa emfihlakalweni.

### **Ndingathetha nabani ngesi sifundo?**



Ukuba unemibuzo ofuna ukuyibuza okanye nayiphi na ingxaki nayiphi na ingxaki oyifumanayo, tsalela umnxeba uMe. Carien Fortuin kula manani 073 7269 622. Okanye ungatsalela mna me (M. Matthews) kula manani 079 1914 042

## Ze kuthini xa ndingafuni ukwenza oku?

Xa ungafuni ukuzibandakanya nokufunda unalo ilungelo loyeka kungekho ngxaki uzothi ungene kuyo. Noxa abazali bekunike imvume yokuthatha inxaxheba unako ukuyeka naninina.

Ingabe uyaluqonda oluphando kwaye uzimisele ukuthatha inxaxheba na:  
(Bonisa impendulo ebhokisini)

1. Uvavanyo lokufunda	Ewe    Hayi <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
2. Ukubhala uvavanyo lokuqonda	Ewe    Hayi <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
3. Uthatha inxaxheba kungenelelo	Ewe    Hayi <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
4. Ukuphendula imibuzo	Ewe    Hayi <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
5. Udliwano-ndlebe bucala	Ewe    Hayi <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
6. Udliwano-ndlebe ngamaqela	Ewe    Hayi <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Olu phando luphendule yonke imibuzo yakho?	Ewe    Hayi <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Uyaliqonda ilungelo lakho lokuyeka naninina uthatha inxaxheba koluphando xa ufuna?	Ewe    Hayi <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

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Utyikityo lomntwana

## Addendum M1- Reading Text 1

### What's Wild about African Wild Dogs? By: Catherine Clarke Fox



What's the difference between African wild dogs and the dogs we know as pets?

1. African wild dogs, which live in Africa, south of the Sahara desert, only have four toes, while domestic dogs and wolves have five. Wild dogs do not make good pets. They need to be out in the wild doing what they are supposed to be doing – ranging many miles every day and hunting to find the food they need to survive and feed pups.
2. They travel so far that researchers use radio collars to keep track of them. The collars send out radio signals that tell people where the dogs are. African wild dogs are a separate species from domestic dogs: *Lycaon pictus*, which means painted, wolf-like animal. No two wild dogs have the same pattern to their coats, so it is easy to tell them apart. Roaming through grasslands, savannas, and wooded areas, they hunt gazelles and other antelopes, baby wildebeests, warthogs, birds, and rats. Incredible hunters, they can run up to 35 miles per hour (56 kilometers per hour).
3. African wild dogs are smart and sociable, like pet dogs. They enjoy each other's company and live in packs of about six to 20 animals. Both males and females look out for young dogs and make sure they have food. African wild dogs talk to each other with two common types of calls. The 'hoo' call is a call that they make when lost or when a pack member is missing. It sounds almost like an owl. The twitter calls carry only very short distances, and are used to wake up the pack members and rally them to go hunting. They are very high pitched and sound almost like songbird calls.
4. There's one huge difference between domestic or pet dogs and African wild dogs. Millions of domestic dogs live on the planet, but there are probably fewer than 6,000 African wild dogs left. Lions and hyenas eat them, but most of all, African wild dogs are threatened by people. Humans hunt them, and ranchers and farmers who don't want them going after cows and sheep poison them. Humans are also destroying the wild, natural habitat they need to survive.

## Addendum M2- Reading Text 2

### No title

Ann is a good swimmer. She does well in school swimming events. She wants to make the provincial team. So far she hasn't been successful but she is very determined.

She practices every day. This means that she must get up early so that she can swim in the school pool before classes start. Three afternoons a week she goes to the public pool for group coaching. Over weekends she often takes part in swimming events.

"I've found that I have to be very organised and disciplined," said Ann. I have to make time to do my school work and chores at home and also have fun with my friends. I must also eat healthily and get enough sleep because swimming takes a lot of energy.

"Before I set my goal to become a provincial swimmer I found it much more difficult to train hard", continued Ann. Now I'm much more focused. I know I can't be a swimmer all my life but I know I want to do something connected with sport, such as a personal trainer or a coach.



***Text taken from Gr. 8 Life Orientation Book***

## Addendum N

### SAMPLE of Learner's RST

#### READING STRATEGY QUESTIONS

##### Reading Strategy Exploratory Questions

1. What is the title of this passage?

What's wild about African wild dogs? (1)

2. Where do these wild dogs live?

In Africa, south of Sahara desert. (1)

3. Do you think that wild dogs are good pets?

Quote a sentence from the reading text. → Miss the quotation!

(yes) because their smart dog their stay with us (0)

4. Explain why the wild dogs have to hunt every day. Incorrectly interpretation.

Because they can't do things for themselves & don't have food (0)

5. Give another word for clever in the reading text. (paragraph 3)

Sociable (0)

6. Do you agree that people are a big threat to the wild dogs? Incorrect interpretation of the questions.  
Give TWO reasons for your answer.

yes, I agree because wild dogs have to find food for themselves and African dogs are separate species from domestic dogs. (1)

7. Write down TWO questions that the teacher can ask you about the wild dogs.

① Why do they have to make a sound when one of their members is missing? (1)  
② Why do their collars send out radio signals? (1)

8. Summarise paragraph 3 in your own words. Write about 20 words.

African wild dogs are clever like pets. Both the male and female look out for young dogs to ensure they have food and they are safe and when one of their members is lost they make a certain sound (hoo) (1)

- \* Little knowledge of summary.
- \* Sentence structure incorrect
- \* Missing words.